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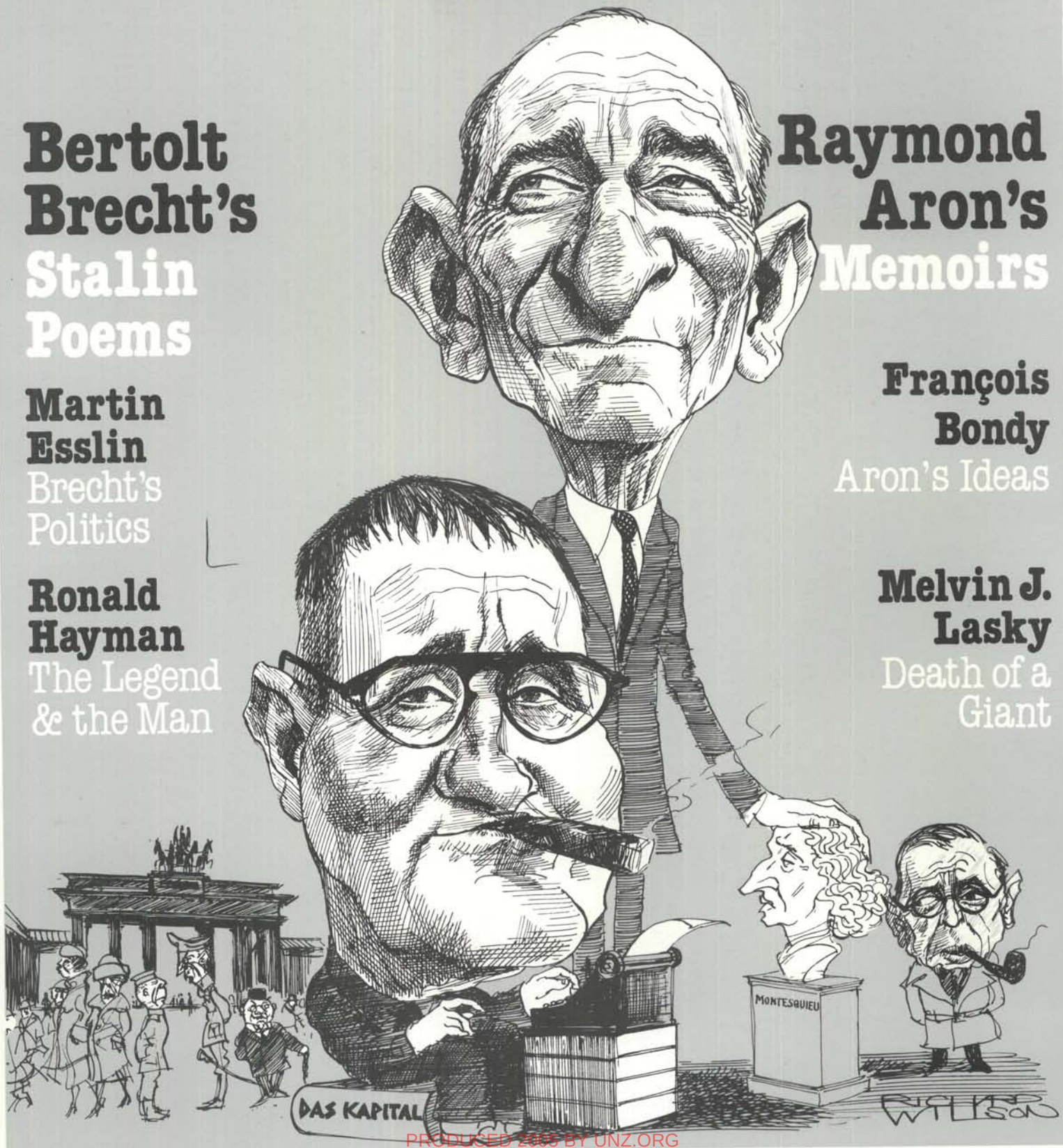

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James Lasdun

Property

A SMALL PARCEL ARRIVED on the first morning of my visit to my grandmother at her flat in Mayfair. I watched her opening it amid the debris of our breakfast. The process was very slow and laborious; her fingers were gnarled and enfeebled by arthritis, and could barely gain sufficient purchase to loosen the bow, let alone break the string. The sight of those hands, I remember, was like a dream of helplessness; it sapped all the strength from me. She tried, and failed, and tried again to slip the slackened cradle of string around the edge of the little box. A small cluster of rubies nestled beneath a knuckle, as startling there as the tiny brilliant cherries that sometimes appear on ancient trees in derelict orchards. The back of each hand was mottled with purple veins and mauve contusions.

Inside the parcel was a pair of ornate silver scissors with a little box protruding from the blades. It was for snuffing candles. My grandmother held the scissors at arm's length, peered at them, and then gave a soft cry of recognition. There was a note with them, which she read, also at arm's length.

"How very peculiar." She passed the note to me.

"Dear Mrs Cranbourne", it read, "I am returning these candle-trimmers which I stole from you when I was in your service. I hope it is not too late to ask your forgiveness. We are both getting on now. Yours sincerely, May Prosser." No address was given.

"Isn't that peculiar?" my grandmother asked me. She read the note again and examined the trimmers. "May Prosser. I'd forgotten all about her. She left me years ago, before you were born." She rubbed the scrolled silverwork with a finger. "What a funny thing to do. I knew she'd stolen them, of course. Only one didn't like to say without proof. What can she be up to, giving them back now? Perhaps she's gone gaga."

"Gaga", I echoed, with a giggle.

My grandmother shrugged, and laid the trimmers aside, seemingly unperturbed. But as the hours went by, it became clear that the episode had unsettled her.

We passed the time, as was our routine on these visits, in her cluttered, over-heated drawing-room. She would lie on a chaise longue sipping cassis and scrutinising the fashion pages in women's magazines. She had worked for such magazines in her day, and still counted herself an assiduous student of style. Her cheeks were always heavily rouged, and her lips were pearly pink. Pomanders, pot-pourris and lavender bags filled the warm room with sweet dry odours, and such dust as I ever encountered while I idled on the floor was always scented with that same sweetness.

She loved jewellery, as did I. She wore quantities of it even though she rarely saw anybody, and she had books on the subject, filled with glossy pictures which I pored over with undiminished fascination each time I came to the flat. Sometimes she would let me open her jewellery box and spill its contents on to the carpet. Coral and lapis lazuli; pearls, jade, a ring made of gold that swirled like a turban, stripes of sapphire, florets of emerald and diamond, charm bracelets dangling silver animals with watch-jewels for eyes, a great brooch of aquamarine. . . . I could lose myself in rapture for hours over the contents of that box—"You ought to have been a girl", my grandmother would laugh, then reach for her cassis, and sigh.

Sometimes, too, she would read to me. Our favourite tale was of the old Russian soldier who frightened death away by squeezing blood from a stone, only the stone was a beetroot. I liked the story for its cunning; she, I suppose, for its conclusion. I think she would have piled her kitchen high with beetroots had her sanity ever so much as wavered.

We passed much of the time in silence, absorbed in our own activities; comfortably aware of each other's presence, but feeling no obligation to speak.

However, on this day, the day of May Prosser's parcel, my grandmother became increasingly restless and talkative. From time to time she lowered her magazine, frowned, and observed how *very* peculiar, or strange, or odd it was of that woman to do what she had done. "A horrid little woman she was too", my grandmother said. "What can she want with me I wonder?"

Then by degrees her attention turned from May Prosser to the candle-trimmers themselves.

"They belonged to *my* grandmother. When I was your age—" A stream of reminiscence began then to pour from her. The parcel had prised open a fissure in her, and her early life welled through. She talked and talked, quite oblivious to me, and was still talking when the nurse arrived to administer her drugs and help her

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bathe. The following morning a registered letter arrived with May Prosser's writing on it. My grandmother looked at it with distaste.

"You open it", she said.

There was a banker's draft inside, for two and a half thousand pounds.

"Dear Mrs Cranbourne", read the accompanying note, "please accept this money in payment for the vase I broke and denied breaking. You knew I broke it but were kind enough not to make trouble for me. I don't know how much it was worth, you said thousands. I hope this is enough, it is all I have. Please do not think too ill of me. Yours sincerely, May Prosser."

"Oh", said my grandmother, "how dreadful." She looked forlornly at the draft. "How dreadful. She's sent me her life savings. She must be going senile. What shall we do?"

I LOOKED UP FROM MY CEREAL uncertain what to say. For my part, I could see no problem. I had just begun to make the connection between money and happiness. I periodically made myself miserable wondering how someone so feeble as I felt myself to be could ever make enough money to be happy. Through sheer force of anxiety I had established a custom among my relatives, that they should tip me handsomely whenever I met them. I hoarded pennies, and felt it my sacred duty to appropriate any untended loose change I found in the households where my parents deposited me on their frequent travels abroad. I wanted to tell my grandmother that I would gladly take the money from May Prosser myself, if she felt unable to accept it. I had enough delicacy, however, to realise that now was not the moment to do so.

She looked so weary and troubled, there in her veils of gauze, her eyelashes not yet on, her sparse wisps of reddish hair spirited into a frail dome over her scalp.

"What could I possibly want with her money? She must be mad. The vase was insured anyway. We were hoping somebody would break it. Such a horrible thing. A relation of your grandfather's gave it to us as a wedding present. It was a piece of expensive antique tourist junk from Germany. A great big glass goblet with enamelled views of Bavarian castles all over it. Quite the ugliest thing I ever owned."

We went slowly into the drawing-room, her arm on my shoulder, rose-scented talc swirling invisibly about the folds and tucks of her gauzy night-gown.

"I shall dress after lunch", she said. She lay on her chaise longue and reached for a magazine. I could see the wrinkled flesh sagging from her arm as she stretched it towards the pile. The blotches on her skin were big and far apart, like the first raindrops on a pavement. I poured out her glass of cassis. She gazed at the furred and jewelled models.

"I had a coat with a collar like that", she might say, or "Those hats were fashionable in my day."

I took a pack of the stiff, brand-new playing-cards of which she had an endless supply, and spread them on the floor for a game of Pelmanism against myself. Net curtains made an area of milky light behind her. The deep red bloom of an amaryllis on the television testified to the tropical conditions of the room.

"She knows I don't need her money", my grandmother murmured. "Why does she send me these things?" Then, as I matched two queens and proceeded to redeem pair after pair from the spawn of cards on the floor, she said, "Your grandfather was just like you. He never forgot a thing. I, on the other hand, was always too muddled and light-headed to remember very much at all."

But now, as she lay sipping her cassis and watching my little feats of memory, her own memory began to belie those words. At first she picked randomly at her married life, much as I had done at my jumble of cards, mismatching people and incidents, dates and events, until gradually the episodes fell into place, and started to resurface in her mind with something approaching clarity.

"We visited Europe's capitals for our honeymoon. It took us almost a year."

She recalled the doorman's braided piping at a Viennese hotel, heat rash in Rome, how her husband was mistaken for the Grand Duke of Luxembourg in a lobby in Baden-Baden, an itinerant jeweller in Amsterdam tipping on to the embroidered cloth of their restaurant table a chamois pouch full of unset amethyst and tiger's eye, red champagne in Prague, triplets in maroon cloche caps tipsy in the enclosure at Chantilly . . . she lay back sipping her cassis, remembering these things and the later years. She was not addressing me. The words streamed from her lips as if autonomous, and she, sallow beneath her rouge, seemed at once oblivious to and enrapt in them, like an exhausted medium transmitting a dead soul's testament. Elisions, not lacunae, fixed a quarter-century into the two or three hours before May Prosser's successor came to prepare our lunch.

MY GRANDMOTHER TALKED incessantly, the memories soon flowing too fast for her mind to separate them so that the past became populated with strange hybrid events comprising such occasions as my mother's birth, my aunt's fiancé dying of shrapnel wounds, and a series of picnic breakfasts one summer on the South Downs. I could not follow her, and she too seemed estranged from her own loquaciousness. By lunch-time her forehead was moist enough to reflect the milky light of the netted window.

"I am over-exciting myself", she said. "Here—" I helped her to her feet, and we walked unsteadily to the dining-room. "I haven't thought about these things for years", she told me as she served the veal and asparagus. "I don't think it is very healthy to dwell on one's past. Do you?"

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AND TO DISTRACT HERSELF from it, she switched on the television after lunch. She liked to watch the races, and was nurturing a taste for them in myself by encouraging me to gamble. She would give me a pound to bet with—I invariably chose the outsider with the longest odds, thinking thereby to make my fortune. I would take the pound down to the hall porter and ask him to place my bet for me at the bookmaker. The porter was inclined to pocket the money himself if he thought the horse had absolutely no chance. We could see from the window whether or not he went to place my bet, and long ago we had discovered the added amusement of gambling with each other on his capriciousness.

"I bet he doesn't go", I said to my grandmother, handing her a half-crown which she was to return doubled if I were proved correct.

I was, and anyway the horse fell at the first fence, as it almost invariably did. It pleased my grandmother immensely to benefit both myself and the porter in this way. She was a gracious giver; it flustered her to receive.

We allowed the television to divert us for the rest of the day. My grandmother had personal feelings towards the presenters and compères. She was of a generation that experienced them as real people, not the corporative chimeras we now know them to be. She adored the new breed of camp comedians taking over the shows. "*Terribly* funny", she would say with a guilty smile, as if apologising to someone who disapproved, or else, "He *does* make me laugh." To be made to laugh was, for her, the principal reason for having a television. She watched, figuratively speaking, with her ribs exposed, willing the performer to tickle them. The News bored her, quiz programmes she disliked, though her real contempt was reserved for the soap operas that left life as dreary as it was. "Why on earth do people want to watch these programmes?", she would ask if we accidentally alighted on one in our quest for amusement.

By night-time, when the nurse arrived, it seemed the morning's disturbance had been quite forgotten. And when nothing arrived in the post with the following breakfast, it seemed also that the remainder of my visit was going to pass in its customary tranquillity.

"Perhaps we might have tea at Fortnum's this afternoon", said my grandmother as she finished her last piece of toast.

But shortly after breakfast the doorbell rang, and there was the porter, a cigarette in one hand, and a vast bouquet of roses in the other.

My grandmother caught her breath as I brought them into the drawing room.

"Dear Mrs Cranbourne", the note with them read, "I am sorry to disturb you yet again, but I have just remembered one last thing. Some roses once arrived for you from a man called Geoffrey Isaacs. You had gone out, having lost your temper with me for no good reason. I took the roses myself out of spite. Please forgive. I hope I did no damage by my wickedness. God bless you, yours sincerely, May Prosser."

My grandmother's face slackened into a look of haggard helplessness.

"Geoffrey Isaacs", she said quietly. She started to tug at the cellophane wrapper covering the roses, but soon gave up and laid them on the window-ledge beside her. The roses were a lush velvety crimson. The wrapper glazed them, and they were wet too, big dewy beads of condensation dripping on to the furled red petals and the dark green leaves from the inside of the cellophane.

WE WERE QUIET AGAIN that morning, but it was not a calm quiet. We lay as if we had eaten excessively and any activity beyond breathing was uncomfortable. We were super-enriched—I have had that sensation since; it is as if your blood has been exchanged for some sweet creamy substance that swells in your veins until you feel over-ripe, over-laden, and all you want to do is disburden yourself of all that clots up your life. It can herald a severe depression, or a nosebleed, or a bout of insatiable sexual desire. It is pleasure taken to an unbearable extreme; a refined torment, only for those among whom superabundance is an occupational hazard. We lay still in that hot room; we were like Keats's bees in their over-brimmed, clammy cells.

Unanimated, my grandmother's face looked glum and old. Occasionally she sipped thoughtfully at her cassis and murmured to herself. "She oughtn't to have taken them", I heard her say, and "She oughtn't to have returned them", and once or twice "Geoffrey Isaacs, well I never." I didn't find out who he was.

She looked drowsy on her chaise longue, and dishevelled. She sighed. Neglected by her, I too became anxious and disconsolate. I was yearning to be older; to be able to control things. I had brought out my bubble-blowing kit to entertain myself that morning. I can remember dipping the plastic hoop into the soapy liquid, and then feeling incapable of breathing life into the taut, translucent membrane. Instead I watched its oil-bright colours swirl and dilate as if they were about to resolve themselves into some dazzling, tremulous sesame, never doing so before it burst.

I brought my grandmother's lunch in on a tray, but she laid it aside after staring at it miserably for a few moments. "I don't think I'll manage Fortnum's this afternoon", she said. Then, remembering her duties as my hostess, she added, "But shall we watch the races instead?"

I selected an outsider running at a hundred or so to one. She gave me a pound. I took the lift down the mirrored hall and gave the money to the porter.

"I bet he will go today", I said, handing my grandmother one of the half-crowns she had paid me the day before.

"Very well, dear."

I watched out of the window, and sure enough the porter presently ambled out of the building, cigarette in one hand, my pound note in the other. I was aching; full

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of indefinable needs. Too much was passing through me, but I craved for more. I had to help myself to my half-crowns from my grandmother's handbag, she feeling too listless to search for the coins herself. I opened the stiff, shiny bag, fingered through its freight of lipstick, tissues, powder-compacts, credit cards, mirrors and receipts, opened the soft leather purse and, thinking it would assuage my desire, took all the silver it contained, and the copper too.

We watched the race—I, with my habitual excitement, she with a fearfulness that turned, as did my excitement, to a kind of nausea as we realised my outsider was going to win.

"Well there you are", my grandmother said when it was over, "we've won a race."

We waited for the porter to arrive, avoiding each other's eyes, as if we had been caught at something shameful.

The bell rang. The porter stood there in a cloud of smoke, chuckling and twinkling, thrilled to be a bringer of such good tidings. He strode past me into the flat, holding our winnings in a carrier bag.

"You've done it", he bellowed. "I never thought the day would come. My congratulations to you, Mrs Cranbourne, and to you, sir."

We wanted him to leave the bag and go, but he was waiting for us to rejoice with him. "Everyone's winning today", he said. "They ran out of notes. Here—" He reached into the bag and tossed me a dozen polythene envelopes full of coins. Some of the envelopes burst open with a clink as they hit the floor. The rest of the money was in notes which he handed solicitously to my grandmother. We thanked him, but he wouldn't go. He stayed there grinning and puffing, as if he expected us to tip him, or at least count the money with him. Then he caught sight of my bubble-blowing kit.

"Look", he said to me, "I'll show you a trick." He dipped the hoop into the liquid, and inhaled deeply on his cigarette. He thought he was so cheerful, but at that moment he was hateful to us. Slowly and carefully he blew smoke into the drumhead of soap. We looked on silently as three big smoke-filled bubbles billowed out and drifted heavily towards the window. Daylight showed the smoke swirling inside the bubbles. It was the colour of jaundiced porcelain. The heaviest bubble fell back towards my grandmother. She closed her eyes as it approached. It burst on her gemmed knuckle, releasing a gout of smoke that dispersed about the notes she was holding.

He blew a stream of smaller ones that fell like silent bombs on the floor about me. We could not bring ourselves to applaud him, and waited silently for him to make his exit.

"Well", he said, "that's it. That's my trick. I'll be off then, shall I?" We made no effort to delay him.

LEFT TO OURSELVES WE NEITHER SPOKE nor barely stirred. My grandmother's eyelids drooped and she fell asleep. I tipped out the coins from all the polythene envelopes, and played with them. I counted them, I arranged them in big concentric rings, I stacked them into crooked columns that tottered precariously and crashed to the ground, I filled my mouth with them and spilt them out like a human fruit machine; I built them into mounds and swam my hands through them.

It was not until much later that it occurred to me that the notes, too, were mine to play with. The sky had darkened and the room was grey. I whispered Granny can I have my money. She made no response. I knew I should have let her be, but I could not help myself. I crept up to her. She was holding the notes in the air below the window-ledge. The dark little rubies sparkled secretively from her knuckle. I reached my hand towards the fanning wad of notes clasped in her fingers. I pulled gently at the money but it refused to slip from her grasp. I was perplexed; I thought perhaps she was teasing me, or that she had decided not to let me keep the winnings after all. A tiny sensation of panic passed through me. I tugged sharply at the notes. They came away immediately, and as my hand shot upward it struck the bouquet of roses lying over the window-ledge. Condensation had gathered in a dipped corner of the cellophane. As I struck it, the water slithered out of the hole in the corner and splashed down on to my grandmother's face. She did not flinch. The water broke into little quicksilver drops which trickled over her powdered skin.

By the time the nurse came it had collected at the scoop of her throat. It glinted there like a colossal jewel.

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Ivan Hutnik

The Fire on the Other Side of the Glass

DANCING ON THE LAWN, I dance the dance of the god-blessed. They think I can't read their sign, "Keep of the Gras." And you think I can't understand your language, white foreigner. You hand me your rupee notes when you see my hand outstretched, my woeful look, my shabby, holed clothes. But who is the fool, you or me? It is not me who gives away money.

With my nose pressed against the huge water-crystal glass I can see into your air-conditioned world. (O no, they would never let me past those vast, brass-handled doors, but I don't ask that.) I am content just to peer in. And I let my tongue hang out and my nose run to tease you as you put a forkful of red meat into your mouth, feeding that already overfull body of yours. I see you try to hide your disgust, your guilt, your embarrassment; I run away before the doorman can chase me. I don't even want your meat, fat man. I don't eat meat—don't like it. You see, it is wrong to eat meat (and why is it that you don't eat with your hands?).

I know how to hunt among the rubbish to find things to sell to buy my food. I don't need you to enable me to survive, but I like to let you think I do. To make you feel good. What do you feel, I wonder, as the doorman opens the door for you, as the chauffeur drives away, as they mutter belligerently behind your back? Do you know how they detest you because of your money? You can't do. You wouldn't allow yourself to remain in their presence—you have too much self-respect! But I don't hate you—I know you mean well. You give to me only because you want to be generous. I understand that: I see it in your eyes. That is more than they see. They only see your money. But it doesn't come between you and me—I don't need your money. Today (this is the cold time of the year when all the foreigners flock to the city) I have made more than that turbaned, so-distinguished-looking doorman. My dress serves me better than his—he just gets hot from standing in the sun and maybe a fifty paise tip, though he does look so very nice. In this world it is dangerous to be generous.

It is lonely in that cold pool on the other side of the glass. People glide past each other stiffly, never stopping to talk. When you sit, you sit apart, not touching. You talk in a lowered voice, as if unsure of yourself. I have watched you for two whole weeks now (that is much longer than you foreigners usually stay in the hotel—is there something wrong, I wonder?). But you people are all the same—it is not worth worrying on your account. You like your loneliness. Do you never look out through those strings of glass beads, through the vast sheets of glass, and envy us?

Yesterday I clung to the bumper of your car as it pulled away from the hotel, and rode all the way to the bazaar with you. I saw you look back at the railway bridge. You looked straight into my eyes. I saw terror. What did you see? Did you hear the steam engine as it clanked and hissed on the bridge? It was bright green, throwing ash and sparks high into the air. The coaches were red and cream—colours for travelling to a distant place. I sit at the river with Rajesh, the cattle boy, and watch them as they storm over the water (I know about trains, you see). But why were you so scared, my friend? Were you scared for me? There is no need. Surely one so strong would not be scared of me! Though I know that Siva has his mark on me.

Sometimes, in the days when we were still living in the village, I would slip out from the hut when Grandfather was asleep, and steal life from his hookah. After a while I would float on the sky—and there I would watch. I heard the sound of the cow-bells, the creak of the bullock-carts, the bleating of the goats as they were driven back to the village for the night—but I heard this, my fat benefactor, in sight, not sound: all fire in the sky dancing with the great wheel, whirling, weaving: all power. It was in those days that I first knew of the railway trains—birth, destruction, rebirth all in one—the churning of the elements: the recreation of what is and was. Is that what scared you—the incarnation of Siva passing over us? Or did you see the mark of Siva in my eyes? Did you know the sense of my third eye as it fixed on you? But this that is other-than-me does not concern us now.

You look so very sad, yet you are young and still innocent. You are older than me in years of this earth, but you know very little. Once, in the village, I saw a man killed—run through with a scimitar. I saw the blood, heard his screams and the cries of the women. But I did not cry. It is as they say: I was born old. You do not know of these things. Yet you are sad. I do not understand it. There are girls near here that men go to to make themselves happy. Why don't you go to them like everyone else? I would like to see you less lonely, less unhappy—more alive. Why don't you let me teach you

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of life? I will take you to my friends. They will show you how to live. We will stone rats by the great river, steal fruit from the stalls in the bazaar, ride on the backs of cars, swim, play tag in the alleyways—you need not die while you are still alive. I will show electric machines that the rich boys play with in the new part of the city. There is much to see, and Rajesh knows it all. Please, white man, don't look sad.

Or has your mother died too? That is indeed a terrible thing. Long after my own mother had died, I hoped for the day when I would see her sit up in bed and start to scold me in the way she always did as soon as she awoke. But now I know there is no hope of seeing her again. Death is final (my father told me when he was drunk). I hadn't realised until that moment that he really did love her in spite of always beating her. That somehow made it all much better—his sharing my misery in her death. Sometimes, at night, I still cry when I think of the way she used to hold me. After that we left the village and came to the city. (I knew then all the horrors that the world could contain.)

The car is here again. Where do you go when you ride in the car? There must be some great reason for your travel. I can tell you are like the elders in the village Panchayat. They had great reasons for everything they did. They were very wise. We could always rely on them—even the time when dacoits threatened us. I wonder who relies on you?

And when you come, as I know you must, you will look at me with haunted, questioning eyes. What is it that you ask, I wonder? I never know if you expect an answer. The chauffeur opens the door and you step into the car, just as with every other day. And, yes, you look back to where I stand and smile and wave. And for maybe the briefest of moments I will see the flicker of a smile on your face.

Eventually, you will return, as everything must. When you come back you will give me a rupee and the doorman will drive me away. This is the pattern that has established itself—the ritual that binds us together, though we never speak. It is the way things are.

But today you do not come. The car stands here waiting, empty. Surely you have not left hurriedly in the night! Or did you see the sun sink into the dark with the sign of the fire of death wrapped round it? Is it wisdom that keeps you away? I cannot believe you would go without giving me something. You would shower many lavish gifts on people at your departure. You are an important man—everyone would know of your leaving. Maybe you would even give me that watch I have seen on your wrist (and that is something I should not like to miss!). In any case, I slept here, on the pavement, all through the night. There was no car. No one left.

I would leave you if it were not for that fire in the evening sky. I know that portent—it is the fire of Kali: the wife of Siva in an angry mood. I shall enter the hotel. I do not do this often, for it is a risk. If they were to find my route they would stop me ever entering again, and I need this escape from the bad times. It is here that I sometimes hide from the police. It is a good place—there is food left on the tables in the hotel grounds.

Here is the loose drain-cover. There is never much water in the drain. It is easy to crawl through. On the other side it leads to the boundary ditch which runs around the hotel. It is a very safe route. It is my secret (and I share it only with the rats). Ugh! The pigs have been here again, and they are not clean animals. It is true that I share it with the rats and the pigs (no one has told me why there are pigs in the hotel).

SO, YOU ARE NOT on the lawn, my white friend. No, I was wrong—there you are on the sun-bench by the side of the pool, almost hidden by the palms. I didn't see you at first—the patterns of shadow play strangely on your skin. From here I can see that you are not well. What is wrong? I will see what I can do for you. I have to return your favour—it is the least I can do. I will approach from the far side, then I will be able to travel through the thickest part of the flame-trees.

You are cold. Cold like my mother was cold.

I shiver strangely. Maybe I have fever. Your eyes are glassy. What is it like on the other side of the glass?

I should have warned you. I should not have expected you to know. I told you of my third eye. I said to you that the mark of Siva was on me. Maybe you did not understand. Where are you now, white foreigner? Maybe now you can explain these things to me.

Once, after the floods had come, I saw men—carcases, swollen—floating on the great river. They were bloated as you are bloated. It is as if you were chosen for death. But I give you my blessing of Siva, fat white man. I press on your forehead the mark of a Tilak made from my spittle and the flower from a flame-tree. The setting sun blinds as it burns in your eyes. I close them to this world—no longer white glass.

Who is there to build your funeral pyre so far from home? Why, there can be no one. I shall build it. In these grounds there is wood that the hotel workers have stopped us from collecting. I shall use that. This is my duty to you. It will at least give you honour in your death. There is no priest by your side, only me—so you will go in the same manner as one day I will. This is your fate—to die as a non-caste. But there is much worse: to live with death a reminder in your heart. I think you lived like that, as I now do. At least you have escaped that burden.

Can you see the fire of the sun lick down to greet the flames of your own fire? It is good: Siva has blessed you. So I will go before the hotel people are drawn here by the flames. Others are sure to come, and remain with you so you will not be alone. But no one must know of me.

The thick smoke rises. Ash is carried in the air. Kites and vultures circle high above. The sky fades to a deep night violet towards the west. But you are gone, white foreigner, and I forgot your watch.

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Raymond Aron

The Stroke

A Memoir before the End

MAY 1977 was the date of my "reprieve", or perhaps a new lease of life. The month before, things had been changed for ever by a stroke. My lecture course at the Collège de France on "Marx's Marxism" was just behind me; I was departing from *Le Figaro*; I was impatient to make a fresh start, with no thought for my age; and now I knew, from one minute to the next, what it was to be a *Dasein zum Tode*. Death, once such an abstract idea, was on the horizon of every day.

I had been struck down suddenly, and was promptly carried off to the Cochin resuscitation centre. I had lost the powers of speech and writing. Conscious—I was about to say fully conscious, but can I be sure?—yet unable to communicate, I gestured for paper and pencil. Laboriously, using my left hand, I wrote three words: *mourir pas peur* (not afraid of dying)." The house surgeon on duty, the son of a political friend of mine, answered me with a smile: no question of that. . . . Was I playing a role in a play? In the space of a second I had become an onlooker, a spectator of my body and my crippled speech; and my *I*, my self, my "soul" (*mon* **je**, *mon pour-soi, mon "âme"*) was holding out in spite of everything, apparently intact (an illusion, of course). The head of the centre, Dr Monsallier, a friend of my colleague Jean-Claude Casanova, came up from the country that evening and assured me that I would recover my speech, at least for the most part. That same evening I heard the three or four doctors puzzling over whether or not my face was out of shape. Apparently they could not decide whether it was contorted to the right or to the left. Their conversation was amusing and reassuring. During the course of that evening I spoke a few words. Dr Monsallier told me later that, half-asleep, I had said something in German. In the morning, for several seconds, I once again spoke as if nothing had happened. The moment of grace was short-lived. It took me several weeks to recover both speech and writing—and then not completely.

According to the doctors a blood clot had formed in an auricle of the heart, aided by a very slow pulse rate (50 to 55) and a cardiac irregularity. The stroke had not been caused by ruptured blood vessels in the brain; my arteries were in no worse a state than was normal at my age. Provided the cardiac irregularity—which had given me trouble before—was corrected and precautions taken against blood clotting, I should be able to lead a normal life. The power of speech would return by itself, bit by bit, with benign after-effects.

I still have one or two memories of those first few days in hospital. The Cochin neurologist came to see me. He pointed to two objects: the cap of a mineral-water bottle and then the neck of the bottle itself. I could think of neither *capsule* nor *goulot*, though now I shall never forget them. He asked me to say *extraterritorialité*—I suppose one of the hardest words in the French language. In spite of these three failures he pronounced himself optimistic. I should be able to give my lectures at the Collège the following year.

Every time I recall that brief day of aphasia and the long days of deficient speech I wonder why I suffered less than I should have imagined I would. When I told my friends of the experience they all said, "It must have been terrible!" Yet in all sincerity I said no, it had not. Was that affectation? Was it insensitivity, pride, will? I don't believe it was any of those things. *Mon* **je**, my *I*, had abruptly taken up residence outside my body and was wondering, with more curiosity than serenity, what instruments it had at its disposal. A semi-recovery of speech was making a minimum of communication possible.

IN A SENSE I have had more trouble in getting used to a partial yet definitive deficiency than I had in adapting to the initial shock itself. As early as the autumn of 1977 I forced myself to face the ordeal of improvising on a television programme. It was the programme *L'Homme en question*, an hour in all, possibly a few minutes over, starting with a self-portrait of about 20 minutes followed by a discussion, usually with two people prosecuting and two defending. Sometimes the prosecutors switch to defence, sometimes the other way around. The producers, judging me capable of looking after myself,

RAYMOND ARON *died in Paris on the 17th of October 1983, at the age of 78. He had just published his memoirs, written in the last years of his life in special and difficult circumstances which he describes in this chapter. An analysis of his ideas is contributed to this number of* ENCOUNTER *by François Bondy (see pp. 21–24); an additional note by Melvin J. Lasky will be found in "In the Margin" (pp. 75–77). The previous issue (January) included a personal memoir by Golo Mann and an obituary in M's Column. His own tribute to Aron's friend Arthur Koestler and "the death of a generation" was published last year in the July–August* ENCOUNTER.

Raymond Aron's "Mémoires", originally published by Julliard, are to be brought out in English translation by Random House, New York.

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had arranged for me to face Maurice Duverger, Nikos Poulantzas, Philippe de Saint-Robert, and Alain de Benoist. The self-portrait, recorded in the staff room at the Collège de France, turned out to be a monologue. The job was done in an afternoon. Two prompters sat beside me and were to have asked questions, but there was no need for that. I was more worried about form than content, and I stumbled over a word no more than three or four times during a monologue of some 30 or 35 minutes.

The discussion with the four "counsel" is not a pleasant memory. Poulantzas duly obliged with the kind of anti-Aron tirade that is a ritualistic bit of ideology for a man of the Left—if only to excuse himself in the eyes of all other *hommes de gauche* for taking part in such a programme. Not long before, Philippe de Saint-Robert had written an abusive article about me in the style of Léon Daudet (though without the latter's talent for earthy realism). Seeing him in person I found even more repugnant than seeing him in print. He came across as the sort of *Action française* type of whom I have a horror, and he made me feel once more that all those nationalistic reactionaries belong to a world in which I could never breathe. Alain de Benoist played his part without being overly aggressive. What little I remember of Maurice Duverger's contribution was critical but courteous.

During the improvised discussion I was only twice held up by "fluffs." The word "*caricatural*" refused to pass my lips; I did not insist but contented myself with "it's a caricature." Friends of mine and doctors who took an interest in me had their ears pricked for the typical after-effects: inversion of syllables, substitution of one word for another, a difficult word mispronounced. The ordeal brought me a measure of relief: I was not debarred from speaking in public. The day was long gone, of course, when after my *agrégation* the chief examiner had put me on my guard against my quick speech and rapid delivery, and the consequent risk of even my most attentive pupils not being able to keep up. That speed had diminished by itself. My fluent elocution had proved partially resistant to the years. After all, many of my later books, the *Eighteen Lectures*, the *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, and even *The Elusive Revolution*[1] had been based on spoken words. But how much was I left with of the good fortune that had once enabled me, among all my other commitments, to reel off lecture after lecture in French, English, or German with no written text but simply a few notes or an outline in front of me?

IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1977–78 I concluded (without crowning) my teaching career at the Collège de France. For the first time, instead of giving 26 lectures, I devoted half the prescribed hours to a seminar on "Social Justice" while the remaining 13 hour-long lectures took the title "Liberty and Equality." I saw my programme through, not without being aware that in the course of an hour I regularly stumbled over a number of words. They were not always the difficult ones I had been dreading in advance—my dread very often occasioned the anticipated slip—but sometimes just any word that would suddenly catch me off my guard.

I had agreed to give a lecture to some students at the London School of Economics who published a journal of international relations; I was to return to the subject of the "Auguste Comte Memorial Lecture" and to deliver it in the same basement lecture-room where twenty years previously I had given *War and Industrial Society*. I did not risk improvising this time. Ralf Dahrendorf took the chair before an audience as numerous, possibly even more numerous, as two decades earlier. But the speaker had changed. The lecture, which kept the same title with the addition of the words "a reappraisal", was not a patch on the old one. Instead of speaking extemporaneously, with light-hearted remarks flowing by themselves as they did particularly when I was facing an English or American audience, I read out the text I had written in English, unable to break free from my manuscript. To make matters worse I was somewhat hoarse, and before many minutes were up I was giving the impression of struggling desperately not to lose my voice altogether. I had suffered from hoarseness at the Collège de France before the stroke; colds used immediately to affect my voice, which was a new problem as far as I was concerned.

That same year, in the autumn of 1978, I gave the "Alastair Buchan Lecture" (commemorating the founder of the Institute for Strategic Studies who had held the chair of International Relations at Oxford). There too I read out in a throaty voice a text I had written originally in French. It was an ordeal—worse, I think, for me than for my listeners. Preparing those two lectures had cost me weeks of work out of all proportion to the results. . . .

WHAT AM I LEFT WITH today, five years on, of my bout of aphasia? I am for obvious reasons a poor judge, prone one moment to make much of my fluffs and lapses and next moment to turn round and convince myself that the youthful facility of elocution that impressed family and friends so long ago had survived the onslaughts of age and that stray blood-clot.

I would sum it up like this. I need to be motivated by my audience. I make more mistakes at home than outside. Monologue I find easier than dialogue. Several months after April 1977, the after-effects of the stroke persisting, I went to see a speech therapist, a charming and attractive young woman; and she made me read a difficult piece of prose full of little-used words (by Bosco or Giono, I think). To my own astonishment I read several pages without a single "fluff." The interview lasted half an hour; and there were two tiny slips—that was all. The speech therapist persuaded me not to embark on a course of "rehabilitation." "People who start rehabilitation exercises don't even hope to achieve the standard you've reached already", she said. Possibly my success deceived her; the test itself had spurred me on.

I gradually recovered my former command of English, and in 1981 I gave a lecture at Oxford, improvising without looking at my notes. The year before I had similarly improvised a lecture on Soviet diplomacy at the Irish Royal Academy, without a

[1] *Dix-huit leçons sur la societé industrielle* (1963; *Eighteen Lessons on Industrial Society*, 1968); *Les Etapes de la pensée sociologique* (1967; *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*, 1968); *La Révolution introuvable* (1968; *The Elusive Revolution*, 1970).

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single mistake to prompt a measure of modesty. On the other hand I have an embarrassing memory of my failure to recall the phrases "*quatre sixièmes*" and "*deux sixièmes*" when attempting to give my tennis-ranking on a television programme called appropriately *On n'a pas toujours vingt ans* ("No one's twenty for ever"). I said "*quatre pour cent*", which the producer Anne Sinclair allowed to pass, not being familiar with the method of French tennis classification.

The hardest loss remains that of my German. I have few opportunities to speak German, and for want of practice I had perhaps already lost the ability, before 1977, to improvise at length in that language. I still think back with some pleasure to the lecture I gave at Tübingen in 1965 on the occasion of the centenary of Max Weber's birth.

The German Sociological Society, anxious to avoid any traditional wrangling among its members, had given the three main lectures to foreigners: Talcott Parsons, Herbert Marcuse, and myself. Parsons, the distinguished American sociologist, had been a student at Tübingen and knew German. He pronounced each word correctly in itself, yet the music of the sentence and the distribution of stresses so far escaped him as to make his reading of his lecture utterly unintelligible, both to the foreigners in his audience and to the Germans. An account of the occasion in *Der Monat* compared the quality of my German with Parsons' failure: he had wished to show respect for his hosts by speaking their language, in acknowledgment of which the audience had without turning a hair listened in silence and incomprehension for almost an hour-and-a-half.

I CAN GET BY WITHOUT German, though there has been no shortage of occasions on which I regretted my loss. In 1974 I had been elected to the Order called in Germany *pour le Mérite*, and had been able to improvise a reply in German to the Chancellor's speech of welcome. In 1977 I was to give the speech made by a member of the Order at the annual reunion, but I had to send last-minute apologies. The invitation was repeated, and in 1979 I accepted and read my text, not without difficulty but at any rate without quite making a fool of myself, although I did stumble over some of the difficult, longer German words. When I received the Goethe Prize in Frankfurt in 1979 my speech was a humiliation. On reflection my text seemed feeble, and I read it even worse than I had feared I might. Why have I not recovered my German, which I learned before English and used to know in far greater depth? For want of practice, since rehabilitation comes from speaking? Or is there some connection between the damaged portion of my brain and the storing of one particular language? I don't know. I am not even sure whether the second hypothesis is to be taken seriously.

Am I unduly humiliated by these "*troubles de la parole*", these speech disorders? Am I wrong not to relax, to start taking it easy? How many of my *cher confrères* are saying (off the record), "If the articles weren't signed *Raymond Aron* would readers think as highly of them as they feel obliged to?" I must admit I have been tempted by Romain Gary's famous literary example, but it seems to me that for a journalist to try such an experiment—the use of a pseudonym to find out whether one's writings are really held in respect, when they are signed by an unknown author—would be meaningless. An editorial leader-writer or a newspaper columnist does not command attention with one or two articles the way an author does when a single novel of his wins critical acclaim or the favour of the book-reading public. Although at *Combat* in the 1940s I was lucky enough to write a successful series of articles on the parties that immediately earned me a position as leader-writer, it is a long-term process by which the journalist wins his stripes, his readership, and the attention of the establishment. As regards my association with *L'Express*, I would say that some of my articles—on the "New Right", on *Le Monde*, on the tragic Rue Copernic bombing—are worth more in my eyes than the editorials week after week.

My recent writing, too, is occasionally disturbed by slips, substitutions of one word for another, even spelling mistakes. Fortunately such literary faults can be corrected without the reader becoming aware of them. But these slips of the pen have been exciting my curiosity. Are they accidental, or are they amenable to some Freudian interpretation? In letters the mistakes that recur most frequently concern possessive adjectives and pronouns: "our" for "your", "mine" for "yours." Only rarely can I detect a repressed desire, an unacknowledged intention, or some subtle insincerity. I imagine that in this instance even psychoanalyst might be prepared to concede a degree of probability to the physiological explanation.

COMING HOME from hospital, was I distressed that there might be permanent damage? Concerned, certainly; but not, I think, distressed. Must I credit myself with a certain strength of will, with *egocentrisme*, or a sort of naive vanity? What I saw, a few weeks after the shock, as accounting for my behaviour was the complete continuity of my awareness, of my "I", my conscious *je*. My brain had been damaged, not myself. My speech centre had suffered impairment, not my thought centre; my right hand had become awkward, but the flaw in the instrument did not affect the workman. On one specific point I had cause for alarm. My prose is relatively abstract, more so than is usual even in the kinds of writing I go in for. Abstraction of style breeds a paucity of vocabulary. I had good reason to fear that my vocabulary would now be even poorer.

As for poetry, I have still not recovered the verses I used to

Kissinger's Testimony

NO ONE had a greater intellectual influence on me than Raymond Aron. He was my teacher when I was a graduate student. He was a benevolent critic when I was in office. I was sustained by his agreement and brought up short by his occasional criticism. And I was moved by his warmth, affection, and unfailing kindness.

Raymond Aron was one of the seminal intellectual figures of our time. The study of international politics is henceforth unthinkable without him. But those of us who loved him will miss above all his caring, tinged with scepticism, his friendship, and his abiding belief in the dignity of man. The world will be emptier and lonelier.

Henry Kissinger

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know by heart. I have not kept up my primary memory, that for words or for incidents experienced. On the other hand, the intellectual system within which ideas and events take their place—the philosophy that I had worked out over the last 40 years and which was firm and complete by the time of the *embolie* in 1977—I believe for the most part survived that malignant stroke of fortune. One day I made a real effort to remember some lines from "La Jeune Parque":

> *Tout-puissants étrangers, inévitables astres*
> *qui daignez faire luire. . . .*"

At which point I had to refer to the text of Valéry's poem (in fact the copy made by hand by Simone Weil, which she gave to my wife). Even the commonest expressions continue to escape me.

Despite everything I made myself live as before, more or less. But deep down I was a different man.

I remember the years 1976–77 well. My lecture course at the Collège de France on "*Le Marxisme de Marx*", for all its obvious imperfections, looked like amounting to a substantial work on what I was coming after so many years to regard as the kernel, the core, of a body of thought as ambiguous as it is fertile. On the morning of that day in April I was talking to Joseph Fontanet as if I had still, at seventy-two, been capable of planting a tree or embarking on some hazardous venture. I am quite sure I would never actually have got involved in any foolish undertaking, but the very fact that I seriously considered it brings back to me my state of mind at the time. I did not at that date rule out the possibility of my writing the two volumes that were to follow *History and the Dialectic of Violence*,[2] as well as a final volume on Marx himself. I believed I still had the time and the strength to do so. After April 1977 I wondered how much time I did still have and how much strength that wretched blood clot had left me with.

A subtle change had come over me. Although in my inaugural lecture at the Collège de France I had said that as far as I was concerned *les jeux sont faits*, I doubt whether that was quite unreservedly my belief. Not that I had said it out of hypocrisy or affectation. At the age of sixty-five the die *is*, of course, cast or *almost*. My reason lost no time over the "almost"; my emotional awareness, if I may call it that, was conscious of nothing else. I was not, to be sure, planning to reopen philosophical speculation on the theory of history, but those two volumes would complete the circle . . . from the *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*[3] to *The Historical Condition of Man*. In place of brief exposés of Marxist thought, in place of passing polemics with the Parisian Marxists, there would be a synthetic analysis not of some monolithic Marxism but of the *diverse tendencies* of that thought as the source of the historical movements basing themselves upon it.

During 1978–79, my first year without university commitments, apart from producing various articles that I had promised to write or now undertook to write, I began to think again about the sequel to my *History and the Dialectic of Violence*. I had not yet decided what to do. During the summer of 1979 I sat down and wrote the first chapter of each of the three books I had in mind: Marxism, Philosophy of History, the Memoirs. (The book of interviews, *Le Spectateur engagé*, had not yet occurred to me at that time.) The three trial chapters showed me that, short of extraordinary control over myself, or rather against myself, it was the third that I must choose. Not through any conscious will but spontaneously, left to itself, my "*I*" aspired to recall my past.

Of all my plans it was also the one requiring the least intellectual effort. I did not question whether my reluctance to talk about myself had become genuinely transmuted into a need to confess. My friends wondered whether I should be able to write in what was for me an entirely new key. So I set about calling up the distant past without any firm intention of finishing the job. I showed the first part of the *souvenirs* to a friend who assured me that these recollections, coupled with events and opinions, would be of interest, possibly even to young readers whose knowledge of the last half-century is limited to biased history books filled with legends. And so I went on to remember and record.

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[2] *Histoire et Dialectique de la Violence* (1973; *History and the Dialectic of Violence*, 1975).

[3] *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire* (1938; *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 1961).

Another Country

Sketched by a thirsty watercolourist,
Kids on hindlegs, miniature black goats,
Begged an olive for its greenest shoots.
Hens pecked at their own shadows in the dust.
And a girl came, as if from a taverna,
Holding a perfumed, sugar-powdered cake
And a glittering beaker of stone-cooled retsina.
The young man thanked her, drank and ate.
Her questions were incomprehensible,
So on his pad he wrote in Attic Greek
With a Made in England 2B Venus pencil:
γραφω ἀλλα οὐ φημι—I write but do not speak—
And her amazement at the oracle
Flattered his manhood like the alcohol.

Duncan Forbes

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Bertolt Brecht

Verses on Stalin

IT HAD LONG been known that after the revelations in Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, Brecht had written a number of poems to clarify his own position. There is ample evidence that Brecht, a life-long Communist Party loyalist, had long been disturbed by Stalin's terror against old Bolsheviks. Too many of his closest friends had been among the victims.

Through the publication, at the end of 1982, of a supplementary volume of Brecht's poems by his West German publishers, Suhrkamp Verlag in Frankfurt, Brecht's poems on Stalin have at last been made public, a full 27 years after they were written.

Although for those who have been closely observing Brecht's utterances available in his published works, diaries and letters, these poems contain little that is new, they present graphic—and moving—evidence of Brecht's struggle to come to terms with the official acknowledgment of the fact of Stalin's crimes. In many ways this mental anguish is analogous to that of followers of Hitler when they became aware of the monstrosity of the *Führer*'s crimes. But for a Marxist like Brecht the matter was even more serious. To ascribe to personal wickedness and perversity the actions of a leader who, according to doctrine, was a scientist acting on incontrovertible scientific evidence—the dialectical Marxist-Leninist method—amounted to a denial of both the exactness of the science and the equally vital axiom that the Party embodied the incontrovertible way of arriving at that scientific truth.

One man has two eyes
But the Party has a thousand eyes.
The Party sees seven countries.
But one man sees one city.
One man has his hour
But the party has many hours.
One man can be destroyed
But the party cannot be destroyed
For it is the vanguard of the masses
And conducts its struggle
With the methods of the classics,
Based on the knowledge of reality.

Now he had to fall back on such lame—and un-Marxist—arguments as that, perhaps, Stalin had not been aware of some of the excesses that had been committed in his name. Or, that in spite of his shortcomings Stalin had done some good: he had strengthened the Soviet Union with his Five-Year Plans and had won the War. And yet, as these poems show, none of these arguments could efface the horror of the facts, and their consequences for an honest reassessment of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.

Martin Esslin

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DER GOTT *ist madig.*

Die Anbeter schlagen sich auf die Brust
Wie sie den Weibern auf den Hintern schlagen
Mit Wonne.

THE GOD **is worm-eaten.**

His worshippers beat their breasts
the same way they slap the buttocks of women,
lecherously.

DER ZAR *hat mit ihnen gesprochen*
Mit Gewehr und Peitsche
Am Blutigen Sonntag. Dann
Sprach zu ihnen mit Gewehr und Peitsche
Alle Tage der Woche, alle Werktage
Der verdiente Mörder des Volkes.

Die Sonne der Völker
Verbrannte ihre Anbeter.
Der größte Gelehrte der Welt
Hat das Kommunistische Manifest vergessen
Der genialste Schüler Lenins
Hat ihn aufs Maul geschlagen.

Aber jung war er tüchtig
Aber alt war er grausam
Jung
War er nicht der Gott.
Der zum Gott wird
Wird dumm.

THE CZAR **had spoken to them**
with rifle and with whip
on Bloody Sunday. Later
there spoke to them with rifle and with whip
every day of the week, every working day
the meritorious murderer of the people.

The Sun of Nations
burned its worshippers.
The world's greatest scholar
forgot the Communist Manifesto.
Lenin's inspired pupil
slapped his mouth shut.

But, when young, he was effective
but, when old, he was cruel.
When young
he was no god.
Men who turn into gods
turn stupid.

DIE GEWICHTE *auf der Waage*
Sind groß. Hinaufgeworfen
Wird auf die andere Skala die Klugheit
Und als nötige Zuwaag
Die Grausamkeit.

Die Anbeter sehen sich um:
Was war falsch? Der Gott?
Oder das Beten?

Aber die Maschinen?
Aber die Siegestrophäen
Aber das Kind ohne Brot?
Aber der blutenden Genossen
Ungehörter Angstschrei?

THE WEIGHTS **on the scales**
are large. Thrown on
the other scale is cleverness
and as a needed makeweight
cruelty.

The worshippers turn round:
What was false? the god?
or our prayers?

But all the machines he built?
The victory trophies?
Yet the child without bread?
and the unheard scream of terror
of our bleeding comrades?

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Der alles befohlen hat
Hat nicht alles gemacht.

Versprochen worden sind Äpfel
Ausgeblieben ist Brot.

He who **ordered it all**
did not do it all.

Apples were promised
What was lacking was bread.

Die geschichtliche Einschätzung Stalins hat im Augenblick kein Interesse und kann mangels von Fakten nicht vorgenommen werden. Seine Autorität muß jedoch zur Beseitigung der Schädigungen durch sein Beispiel liquidiert werden.

The historical evaluation of Stalin is at the moment without interest and cannot be carried out because many facts are still missing. But his authority must be liquidated in order to eliminate damage caused by his example.

ZUR ZÜCHTUNG *winterfesten Weizens*
Zieht man viele Forscher heran.
Soll der Aufbau des Sozialismus
Von ein paar Leuten im Dunkel
zusammengepfuscht werden?

TO DEVELOP **a winter-resistant wheat**
many researchers are mobilised.
Is the construction of socialism
to be brewed together in the dark
by a few men?

Schleppt der Führer die Geführten
Auf einen Gipfel, den nur er weiß?
Zumindest durch die Statistik
Indem sie tun oder lassen
Führen die Geführten.

Is the leader to drag his followers
on to a peak only he knows?
At the very least, statistically,
by what they do or leave undone
it is the led who lead.

ALS DER HELFER *erschien, war er*
Aussätzig. Aber der Aussätzige
Half doch.

WHEN THE HELPER **appeared, he was**
a leper. But the leper
did help.

These poems are taken from the supplementary volume of Brecht's poems *Gesammelte Werke, Supplementband IV* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), pp. 436–438.

Translations are by Martin Esslin

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Two Poems by Alan Brownjohn

Entering my Fifty-third Year

Another animal lounges on my table,
With none of my guilts or aspirations.
He has been poisoned with boiler-fumes, had
Ear-mites and eczema, undergone a short
Paralysis of his hindquarters and survived.
Last year he used up one of his lives in causing
A twenty-ton lorry to swerve into a ditch.
Have I done as much for the environment?
In a moment he will probably leave me
And go over to the garden of the Grapes,
Where people who do not know him from Adam
Will feed him with bacon scratchings and ploughman's cheese.
Would they do as much for me? They do it for him
Because he is definable, they know what he is
And the little things he likes. Today I am as many
Cards as there are in the pack and weeks in the year,
And they would not know where to have me: a merman
Stranded between the tempests of youth and the dried-up
Plateau of walking-frame and electric blanket.
If they found out, what would they make of seven books
Where the life not coded in poems is hidden in blurbs,
And a foot (of Achilles, or Oedipus?) twisted
On a Norwegian mountain and creasing me now
As I lope a birthday mile on a corrugated beach?
I crunch over empty shells in my swimming trunks,
Past forbidden nudists rejoicing in the comfort
That the undressed flesh may be itself and find
Great spiritual solutions and repose. . . .
What is that, they might just ask? It has two legs
Quite suited to a kilt, up to the knees,
But beyond that only girth and ungainliness,
And not-of-the-newest. I limp, and ask myself
How much longer has this machine? It prolongs
Its life with meticulous arrangements, hating to leave
A chair not parallel to the table, or find
The Co-op coffee granules on the wrong shelf;
But it grows slower with its diligence.
It listens less and less when people answer
The questions it poses, they might not have been speaking.
The issues it sorely wants to understand
Might be happening elsewhere. Last night, having had
A dream of death, it groped downstairs and ravaged
The biscuits by torchlight at 4 a.m., as usual.
It hopes it works them off with exercise.
—Today I am still running after the slim one
Who was never there in the past, but some time might be,
Pursuing the true self in this trampled shell:
Inside a man half-a-stone too heavy is a man
So light, and lightheartedly serious, he really finds
Life is both profound and easy; not this tired struggle
In the effort to grasp the *scherzo con espressione*
Which the cat has played without trying all his days.

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Monday Morning

Sir, at the window of the study where
His prayer-books blocked the walls, grabbed for his bell
And the clapper was missing; so he shook
A silence at the playground. Many years
Before it could be technically so,
The sound had gone and left only the vision:

The vision of a bell vainly swinging
At a lordly wrist while our little world
Played on regardless of his stare. *Inside,*
Inside! he had to shout. And we all trooped
Inside to our places, mine being under
A secular picture somewhere near the back.

Picture the wind and rain in tantrums,
And me enjoying lovely hours of learning
In that school of life. Miss Wyke's bright-coloured chalks
Are poised at the blackboard writing truths, the room
Basks in a lime-green shade on sunny days
When the blind is down. And I feel my elbow

Nudging Miss Wyke's cool shoulder as she bends down
To read what I have written, all her red ticks
Fall lavishly across my splendid pages.
And then there come the long, long holidays
All lustrous on lawn and sundial, where I wish
The shadow spun much faster than it did:

I am yearning for the shadow of Miss Wyke
Bringing maturer wisdoms in September.
In my secret exercise-book I make
The summer hours more sweet, Miss Wyke draw near
By invoking her grace in fictions, in tales
Where I find the bell-notes are scarcely needed.

About this time I find inside myself
A social conscience in the shape of marbles
Cadged out of Barbara, who said she liked me.
They touch with glassy kisses and are gone,
And I mourn in the alley's red-and-white globe
The transience of gain, the fact of loss.

—Today I gained the top of the hill and saw
The school, in the haze of distance tinier
Than houses in Monopoly. Barbara
Could be the figure I picked up and set
On the doll's house swing in the recreation
Ground alongside. Night blotted out the scene,

A night in which I find Miss Wyke in dreams
Among her books and music, in Sir's room now.
She asks me to say sorry to Barbara,
And run life sensibly without a bell.
The fields and towns I see in her unstained windows
Are much more like real worlds. I read her books.

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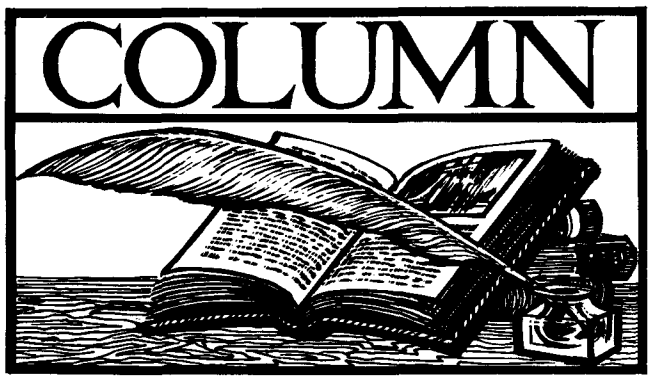

DO YOU REMEMBER James Thurber's grandmother? According to *My Life and Hard Times*, she "lived the latter years of her life in the horrible suspicion that electricity was dripping invisibly all over the house. It leaked, she contended, out of empty sockets if the wall switch had been left on."

Without being alarmist, I'd like to argue that the old lady had a point. I remember a sermon some years ago in which a gadget-minded parson likened religion to radio waves. "There they are, all about us: we can't see them or touch them or even smell them. We can only hear them if we have a receiving set. And it's the same with religion. We need a tuner, an amplifier, a loudspeaker. Faith must be our hi-fi." For the rest, and the accent, see the collected works of Alan Bennett; but the image lodged in my mind. We are, in fact, bombarded all the time by electricity—long wave, short wave, medium, frequency modulation, VHF. By analogy with microwave ovens, it seems surprising we aren't all cooked.

Turning the dial on the radio, or punching buttons on that or the television set, is rather like walking through a street market or an Arab *souq*. All around, hucksters shout for our attention: "*And* it's a fine morning here in Pittsburgh, with the pollen count only—*et maintenant, à vous, Albert Simon*—your Saturday-night entertainment, here on—*dobry wieczór: to jest*—with their fabulous new single—*und so, meine Damen und Herren*—Alfa Foxtrot calling from Hanger Lane—and that, children, is how—*qinnáshra-lgawwíyya*—and now back to—*ciao, amici.*" To say nothing of the music. Guttersnipe howls, blips of orchestral classics, leaden-heavy metal, put-upon pop-songstresses, barbershop and banjo groups, liquescent Latin ballads, geriatric golden-oldies, beer music, tea music, cyanide music. It never ends. Just suppose you could hear it all simultaneously. You'd implode.

As it is, the assault breaks through repeatedly; and it affects us in unexpected ways. Rough talk on television infects our conversation. Children acquire alien speech habits. We tolerate in our living-rooms electronic images of people we buy locks and alarm systems to keep out. All that, although unwelcome, is familiar. Much more stealthy and pervasive is the role that interviewing now plays in our lives.

"I began by asking him. . . . Just how shattered did you feel when. . . . Do you or do you not. . . . What do you say to the argument that. . . . But isn't that to admit. . . . Do you have any comment on. . . . Is this the crunch?" We hear so much of this on radio and television that it becomes an accepted mode. One shy man I know, impeccably courteous, has virtually reduced his conversation to asking questions of his friends. Ideas, information, jokes—he doesn't need them, so long as he carries his imaginary clipboard. "What did you think of the New Year's Honours List? Are you going away this Easter? Have you seen the Carlos Saura *Carmen*? Do you find you can write on a word processor? Why, do you suppose, we don't print advertisements in books?" One sometimes feels like answering in triplicate; but most often the talk turns into a chat show, steered by our discussion-group leader, having a rattling good debate. "A full and frank exchange of views", the eventual communiqué might claim.

To be honest, I've used the technique myself. Bored in a corner at a party full of strangers, I've turned interrogator—and found the victim happy to respond. It may be simply that people like anyone who takes an interest in them, and enjoy talking about themselves. But from the ease with which they adopt the role, I suspect mimesis. Deep down, they think they're on television. It's a game they watch every night.

Nor is this the only symptom of chronic interviewitis. Owing partly to the tape-recorder, some books nowadays read like radio documentaries. An example, I'm told, is one of my own. Strung along the narrative like washing on a clothes-line are what broadcasters call "the inserts": witnesses, quotations, recorded dialogue, official statements, other people's prose. Adroitly introduced, explained, exploited, and paid off with a pat comment, they join the authorial voice in careful counterpoint, turning a one-man show into an ensemble. R. G. Collingwood once dismissed similar efforts as "scissors-and-paste history." What he had in mind, I suspect, was something closer to plagiarism. This, by contrast, is the use in writing of methods learned on the air.

SOMETIMES, THEY'RE APPLIED more directly. ENCOUNTER, like *The Paris Review*, has turned the written-up interview into an art form. And the BBC has published several books based on broadcast features but including material which on transmission had to be cut. The latest such publication is Michael Charlton's *The Price of Victory*,[1] parts of which have already appeared in these pages. Its fascinating detail highlights the vices and virtues of the genre.

The vices first. In print, only skilful writing can reproduce a tone of voice. Mere typography has to make do with italics, dashes, omission dots, and exclamation marks. Transcribing a tape, the temptation is to overdo them, like Queen Victoria's diary; but exclamations, in particular, are usually too nudging to achieve the right effect. Gee, gosh! There's a touch too much of this in Michael Charlton's early pages. Later, he calms down.

The second problem is repetition. In a radio series, listeners have to be reminded of what went before. In a book, the need's less pressing; again, one feels unduly nudged. Finally, the spoken word is often flabby. Even senior officials—let alone politicians—can be prolix in front of a microphone; and their verbosity can't always be edited down.

[1] *The Price of Victory*. By MICHAEL CHARLTON. BBC Publications, £10.75.

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All these, to my mind, are peccadilloes. Speed-readers, who don't inwardly articulate, may find them bothersome: but speed may brush them aside. Those like me, whose lips almost move when reading, will have less trouble. All we have to do is to hear the radio programme in our heads.

And what a programme *The Price of Victory* is! Beginning in World War II, it chronicles the painful adjustment of Britain from the summit of an Empire to the threshold of Europe—only to be excluded, for ten years, by the veto of General de Gaulle. In outline, the story has been told many times: the birth and halting growth of the European Community; Britain's slow realisation that continental Western Europe was uniting without her; the abortive attempt at a Free Trade Area around the Common Market; the smaller, outer EFTA; America's refusal to back the EFTA Seven against the Community Six; Macmillan's *volte-face* in applying for Community membership; the grinding, groping, far too detailed negotiations at the rue des Quatre Bras in Brussels; the agonising moment in 1963 when the General said no.

Today, with the European Community temporarily deadlocked, partly over Britain's contribution to its budget, some may wonder why the old tale is worth retelling. Continental Europeans may be tempted to feel that the General was right. Britons and others may reflect with *Schadenfreude* that the Free Trade Area they sought in 1957 now exists—despite Community pessimists who alleged that it would dissolve their fragile unity like a lump of sugar in a British cup of tea. Connoisseurs of dogma may smile at ancient quarrels between "federal" and "functional" notions of Europe, knowing that today's Community is *sui generis*, neither "supranational" nor solely "intergovernmental." Some professional historians may stifle a yawn.

In fact, *The Price of Victory* is gripping and deeply revealing. Even those most closely involved with the story will have much to learn from it—sometimes matters of detail they happened to miss by being in the wrong committee-meeting, more often fundamental insights into British policy, or the lack of it. Time and again, in the reminiscences of statesmen and civil servants recorded here, one hears the voice of unreconstructed complacency, only now grudgingly recognised and confessed.

Frankest on the subject is the Reverend Sir Herbert Andrew, the wise, friendly, pipe-smoking Yorkshireman who represented the Board of Trade at the rue des Quatre Bras negotiations.

> "We rather prided ourselves, I think, on 'thinking bigger' than the Europeans. . . . We were the one country in Europe which had not been beaten; and to take a collection of losers and join them, and turn our back on the rest of the world, seemed to us in a curious way—looking as we look at it now, it seems curious—to be turning our back on the future."

That, perhaps, explains Lord Franks's feelings:

> "The British very rarely, when they are innovating, think in terms of new institutions. The Americans always do. The French are apt to. . . . The real question is not about the reality of cooperation, the genuineness of the desire to cooperate, it is about why we don't like being tied up with *institutions* of cooperation."

This, of course, was what upset convinced Europeans—"enthusiastic" Europeans, as even Michael Charlton persists in calling them. And they in turn, like the Dutch Premier Johan Willem Beyen, upset such British Ministers as "Rab" Butler: "He was a very pushing man. And he was always telling you what to do. I was sort of looking rather to the bigger nations, you see, and he rather took the lead, you know."

THE BIGGEST NATION to which the British Foreign Office still looked was the United States. Lord Sherfield, then Sir Roger Makins, advised Attlee that "Western Union was never synonymous with Western *European* Union, hence the negotiation of an *Atlantic Community*." When a European Community was first proposed, Sherfield now claims, some Americans like George Kennan and Julius Holmes, the US Minister in London, "were coming around much more to the British view of the *Atlantic Community* development, including of course Europe in this wider grouping. . . . They certainly understood it much better than the Hoffmans, the Harrimans and certainly David Bruce." It's perhaps hardly surprising that Sherfield is later quoted as regarding the watershed of Suez as almost the least among post-war crises. And it's a pleasure to watch Michael Charlton getting under his urbane guard.

> CHARLTON: Can I ask you to comment on something Harold Macmillan says in his memoirs? "I had been shocked", he wrote, "by the Foreign Office view that complete union of the Schuman Plan countries would not be harmful to the United Kingdom. . . . A degree of myopia", he says, "which a mole might envy." Now, what do you think about that?
>
> SHERFIELD: Well, it is strong language. I'm not quite sure what he means by saying that we regarded the Schuman Plan as a threat.
>
> CHARLTON: No, he is saying the opposite. . . . Do you remember those as being the views of Macmillan at the time? When he talks about "what follies we committed in these years", or "the hostility of the Foreign Office", "the isolationism of Bevin", these are his words. . . .
>
> SHERFIELD: I don't recollect talking to him about this in those days. I was, I suppose, totally absorbed in what I was doing in the Foreign Office, and he was trying to build 300,000 houses in a year.
>
> CHARLTON: What does that mean? That as Housing Minister he can't have known too much about it?
>
> SHERFIELD: No, it doesn't. It just means that he was in one box and I was in another box.
>
> CHARLTON: But what about what he says—"the hostility of the Foreign Office", "the isolationism of Bevin"?
>
> SHERFIELD: I think that is exaggerated. The Foreign Office was hostile to what?
>
> CHARLTON: European integration.
>
> SHERFIELD: Yes, to European integration as thought of at the time.

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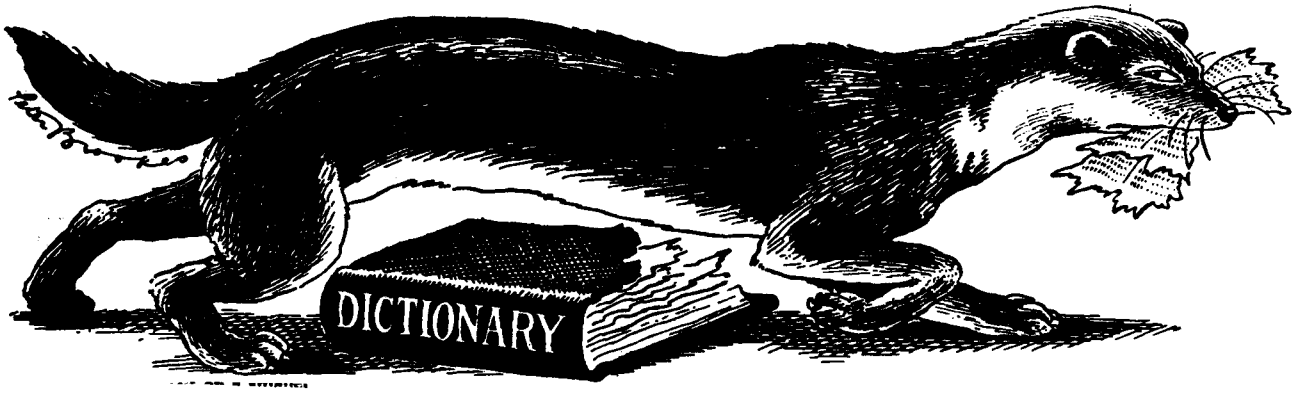
What sort of "Atlantic Community" could have been built with one giant partner and a gaggle of comparative dwarfs? Charlton doesn't ask—any more than the Foreign Office seems to have done. But the Office was not the only innocent sceptic: there was Anthony Eden, and in the early days there were Butler and Macmillan too. Even Eden's critic Anthony Nutting still seems to believe that by joining earlier Britain could have had "the leadership of Europe"; and even Sir Con O'Neill, who helped Britain into the Community, "shed no tears when the European Defence Community failed." Of British senior officials, only Sir Edmund Hall-Patch, one of Bevin's advisers at the Foreign Office, seems to have taken a long hard look at the future of European integration. "If some such integration does not take place", he wrote, "Europe will gradually decline in the face of pressure from the United States on the one hand and the USSR on the other."

That was in August 1947. Is anyone questioning our complacencies today?

M

Weasel Words & Social Vocabulary



THE *adjective "social" is probably the most confusing and misleading term of our whole political vocabulary, a sort of verbal magic wand. It came to be widely used about 100 years ago, but may be traced back to that source of all evil J. J. Rousseau's* **Contrat Social,** *where the word "social" appears as an essential part of the rhetorical substitute for traditional morals.*

The role which the word has since come to play in guiding English thought was brought vividly home to me when, in that most helpful **Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought** *(1977), I found the entry* **"Soap Opera"** *appropriately followed by no fewer than 35 entries for* **"social"** *something or other, from* **"Social Action"** *to* **"Social Whole",** *and, my attention aroused by this, a few days' reading brought well over 100 further influential uses of the word.*

It is indeed difficult to say whether one ought to conclude that "social" has acquired as many different meanings as to become useless as an instrument of communication, or that it has become altogether meaningless. Yet the position is really much worse. Not only has the term itself lost any clear meaning; it has also acquired the probably unique capacity to deprive any other word with which it is associated of content. It has in fact become the most dangerous instance of what after Shakespeare *("I can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs",* AS YOU LIKE IT, **II/5) the Americans call a "weasel word". As a weasel is alleged to be able to empty an egg without leaving a visible sign, so can these words deprive any term to which they are prefixed of content, while seemingly leaving them untouched. A weasel word is used to draw the teeth from a concept which one is obliged to employ, but from which one wishes to eliminate all implications that challenge one's ideological premises.**

While I know what a market economy is intended to mean, I have no idea what "social market economy" can possibly mean except that the rules of the market are not to be followed.

Friedrich von Hayek

*

SIR, *I was astonished to read [A. J. Nicholls writes] that Friedrich von Hayek has "no idea what 'social market economy' can possibly mean". Is the good professor suffering from amnesia? Or was he dozing through all those meetings of the Mont-Pèlerin Society, at which the principles of the social market economy must have been discussed so frequently?*

These principles were implemented by Ludwig Erhard. I have not noticed that the West Germans have suffered impoverishment or servitude by following his prescriptions.

Of course, "social" is a term which has to be carefully defined according to the context in which it is used. There are many such words.

SIR, *It is very much to be doubted [Daniel Johnson writes] whether A. J. Nicholls is right to diagnose amnesia in Friedrich von Hayek's scepticism about the notion of a "social market economy". Professor Hayek's faculties seem undiminished to many of us and it is especially dangerous even for so fine a historian as Mr Nicholls to quote the case of Erhard against him.*

In the May issue of ENCOUNTER *Professor Hayek is quoted thus:*

> **"May I tell you the story of when I last spoke to Dr Ludwig Erhard? We were alone for a moment and he turned to me and said, 'I hope you don't misunderstand me when I speak of a social market economy (sozialen Marktwirtschaft). I mean by that that the market economy as such is social, not that it needs to be made social. . . ."**

THE TIMES *(London)*

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Raymond Aron

By François Bondy

"Neither the Right nor the Left laid claim to him and everybody was suspicious of him."

Raymond Aron on **Tocqueville**

"He was a prolific author and, as is sometimes the case with sociologists, he alternated between writing articles for the daily newspapers and writing thick books, and since he wrote a lot he did not always say the same thing on the same subject."

Raymond Aron on **Marx**

*"He is a solitary man, and the older I get the closer I feel to these 'outcast writers (*auteurs maudits*)'."*

Raymond Aron on **Pareto**

COLD INDIFFERENCE, melancholy, lack of enthusiasm, icy clarity, dryness, pessimism, scepticism, callousness—these were just some of the faults for which the philosopher, sociologist, political scientist, historian of ideas, essayist and journalist Raymond Aron has been reproached. This was so even on the part of those who had a high opinion of him and not just those who reviled him as a "cold warrior", "an instinctive (visceral) anti-Communist", as being "unworthy to teach" (in the words of Sartre in 1968), and even as a "neo-fascist." In the same way he was branded by the Gaullists (in whose *Rassemblement* he had participated in 1947) at the opposite extreme. For them, between 1956 and 1961, Aron was a defeatist, a capitulator, and a traitor to the integrity of French territory because he predicted and advocated Algerian independence in two eloquent pamphlets. This did not stop those politicians who later recognised this same Algerian independence at de Gaulle's behest from blaming Aron for his "premature" insight.

With a few moving exceptions, particularly in the book *De Gaulle, Israel and the Jews* (which is even of a confessional nature), Aron stuck mostly to an objectivity in which his own feelings and emotions were expressed as impersonally as possible. As Simone de Beauvoir recalls in her memoirs, he was regarded as endowed with a perfect intellectual apparatus; and he could get on the nerves of his partners in any discussion, with his remorseless alternatives: "*De deux choses l'une*" (either . . . or). This reproach to the effect that he was a well-oiled mental machine, perfect in every respect, hurt Aron so much that he defended himself against the charge both in newspaper articles and in books.

Is it a question of literary brilliance? After the War there was the fascination of Sartre and Camus, and later of course also of Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, and Foucault. For a long time Raymond Aron was not linked in the same way with an arresting new idea or trend. The historian François Furet (author of a much-acclaimed work, *Considering the French Revolution*), wrote at the time in a much quoted essay on Structuralism (in my own Paris magazine *Preuves*) that after the crisis of Marxism, which in retrospect proved Aron's judgment correct, the hour of the sober empirical thinker was still not at hand, but rather that of a new general theory, "as if in France even the theory embracing the 'end of ideologies' needed its doctrinaire exponents. . . ." Aron once wrote of himself that he had been influenced by Marx and other German philosophers and sociologists, but that his mental style had more and more in common with English and American social science.

Among the major themes with which the name of Raymond Aron was linked in the 1950s and '60s were the contemporary peculiarities of "Industrial Society" (three volumes in the paperback series *Idées*, sold in large numbers) and "The End of Ideologies." Both groups of themes were popular and were also widely misunderstood. A curious and defective theory of "convergence" between Capitalism and Communism, between East and West was derived from the characteristics of Industrial Society, and it was just the opposite of Aron's interpretation, since Aron never believed in the possibility of ascribing political systems directly to technological and economic factors. The notion of "The End of Ideologies", which besides Aron was chiefly developed by Americans like Edward Shils and popularised by Daniel Bell, was overtaken by the ideological resonance of a New Left and by the brief triumphant appearance of the ideologue Dr Herbert Marcuse. Perhaps nobody quite understood Aron's notion of ideas and ideals as the link between state power and secular faith (Fascism, Stalinism). In any event, ideologies were not at an end, neither in the East nor in the West, now in the '60s on the eve of a new ideological fervour or a "Romantic relapse" (as Richard Lowenthal called it).

TWO IMPORTANT CATHOLIC thinkers, the historian Henri Marrou and the Jesuit Gaston Fessard, have related how Raymond Aron's two dissertations for a state doctorate were

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received in March 1938. The *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* had devoted a full-length report to this public "disputation" at the time. Marrou could write later that Raymond Aron's studies in Germany had become a "major point in French intellectual history" and had been instrumental in overcoming the prevailing positivistic orthodoxies of the time. The presentation of German philosophers of history from Dilthey through Rickert and Simmel to Max Weber, and the *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* imported ideas and methods into France (not only directly but also in a synthesis of his own) which were largely unknown. Young Aron did this in a way which was censured at the public "disputation" of his "theses" by famous teachers like Célestin Bouglé and Léon Brunschvicg. Father Fessard, whose last book was devoted to Aron's work, gave a detailed account of this in the two-volume *Festschrift* in honour of Aron's sixty-fifth birthday. One of the examiners shouted at the candidate: "Are you being devilish or only desperate? (*satanique ou désésperé*?)." Bouglé charged: "You discussed your own problems instead of taking up the problems of your authors." . . .

Aron, who later criticised "the pathos" of that dissertation, conceded that he was spurred on by a certain personal necessity, and that he considered it justifiable to examine the truthful viability of the ideas of various authors without going into each and every aspect of all the works concerned. Through these two dissertations as well as through discussions, Aron had drawn Jean-Paul Sartre's attention to German phenomenology, and to Husserl in particular. Aron claimed little credit as the "godfather" of French Existentialism, and although he stressed that his approach at the time was comparable to that of the author of *L'Etre et Le Néant* he liked to acknowledge that Sartre alone could have moved forward "with genius."

This debate took place two weeks after Hitler's "annexation" of Austria. That is to say, in an atmosphere of political disaster, which Aron perceived more dramatically than most Frenchmen because he had experienced at first hand the significance of Hitler's National-Socialist victory. Beset by topical political and polemical problems, Aron never wrote that other philosophical work which he had in mind, and there remains a gap in his later work. The treatise on world politics (*Peace and War*) and the two-volume *Clausewitz*, and his numerous critical works on Marx and Marxists, are no substitute for that great book on Karl Marx which Aron never wrote, although "thirty-five years of reading and rereading Marx" predestined him to do so.

ANYONE WHO KNEW Raymond Aron as a commentator on world politics, a polemicist against "progressives" (*Opium of the Intellectuals*), a professor at the Sorbonne and then at the Collège de France, whose lectures combined the most extensive information and methodological acumen—in short, knowledge and understanding—and anyone who further recalls his special attachment to Montesquieu, to Tocqueville, and to Max Weber may be surprised to learn that Aron not only read Marx much earlier but with far greater fascination than those thinkers of whom he calls himself "a late straggler." And it may also surprise them to learn that he always remained conscious of this lasting attraction even in his most radical and devastating critiques. So it is not a question of *coquetterie* but of necessary elaboration when Aron declares in his essays and his books, in the face of the new-fangled Parisian "existential Marxists" and "structural Marxists", that he had made a thorough study of both Marx and the political economy of his own times, and neither in Sartre nor in Althusser and the others had he found the slightest trace of knowledge about the mechanisms of the market and of planning, but always just the same abstract reasoning which Karl Marx had scoffed at in the fanatical Young Hegelians in his book *Die Heilige Familie*. (That is why Aron called one of his polemical works *The Holy Families of Marxism*.)

Aron was never a Marxist—even when he called himself a socialist—but always a student of Marxism. He even reproached the fastidious German Marxists of the lofty Frankfurt School with a real lack of seriousness, although he had contributed to the famed *Journal for Social Research*. In *Liberals and Libertarianism* (1969), Aron wrote:

> "My age grants me the privilege of recalling a period in the past, the 1930s and the Frankfurt Marxists. They were already mixing up Marx and Freud. They tirelessly denounced the weak and endangered Weimer Republic, which in their eyes did not deserve to survive. When Hitler came to power, even though they condemned Western capitalism much more strongly than Soviet communism, they did not hesitate. Ever faithful to the Marxism of their youth, they continued their remorseless criticism of the liberal society not in Moscow or Leningrad but in New York and California."

He warned against irresponsibly extreme criticism of frail liberal régimes which are dependent on a general consensus, and he polemicised against intellectuals who apply stricter standards to faulty democracies than they do to the cruellest tyrannies—these distinctions remained constant factors in Aron's political commitment for fifty years.

In the 1950s it was not so much the Communists as the pro-Communist and "*progressiste*" Parisian ideologues that Raymond Aron was attacking. I often heard him say that he did so with a sense of a mutual set of assumptions and values which were being betrayed; whereas he did not feel a similar fraternity or solidarity with those on the Right. He wrote sharply that the French academics and the Paris intellectuals who were following the tide and would not stand for any criticism of Stalinism

> "have no desire whatsoever to change present-day France, nor do they feel any real longing for revolution. They wish neither to 'change the world' nor to 'interpret the world' itself. They merely wish to accuse it. Theirs is a dissidence which contents and exhausts itself with carping and thus quite calmly puts up with a situation which is in any case far from intolerable."

ALTHOUGH SOME of Aron's treatises, which mostly arose out of lectures, are a bit diffuse and stylistically inconcise on account of their origin, all those argumentative books and broadsides are, in my view, well worth

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reading. They remain fascinating both in their liveliness and in their combination of nuance and firmness. In fact I am convinced that, even in respect of intellectual profundity, Aron often gave of his best in his polemical pamphlets and occasional writings which suited his unusual gift for dialogue. Here we find such memorable formulations as: "Contrary to the frequently heard reproach, the Fourth Republic was not incapable of holding on to Algeria but of getting rid of it." Or (March 1964):

> "For twenty years I have been fighting fanatics who claim to be optimists but who are prepared to tolerate and even to justify all sorts of crimes as long as they are committed in the name of the right ideas and of the party to which they have signed away their souls. Today I fear more strongly than ten years ago the dangers of conformism and of indifference, which the exhaustion of all-embracing syntheses leaves in its wake."

IN MANY ESSAYS AND SEVERAL BOOKS Raymond Aron took issue with Jean-Paul Sartre, his former "*p'tit camarade*" at the Ecole Normale Supérieure. Especially after the publication of the *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Aron produced several lectures and a book on *The Philosophy of Violence.* Previously, when Sartre kept on identifying Stalin's reign of terror with the interests of the Western European proletariat, Aron had reacted quickly and sharply. (See his collections of essays.) This time he was intent on precise analysis, pointing out certain illogical "phenomenological" shifts of thought and historical distortions. Aron demonstrated that Sartre only seemingly harmonised with his Marxism the Existentialism he never abandoned, and merely achieved a fictitious synthesis. The inherent contradiction in the gigantic torso of Sartre's later work *Flaubert* is already apparent here.

In the summer of 1979—for the first time in half-a-lifetime—Aron had a friendly talk with Sartre once again. The two of them visited President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing along with André Glucksmann (once a student at Aron's lectures on Clausewitz) in order to press for a generous intake of Vietnamese refugees. Up till then the dialogue had been one-sided, as Aron had noted:

> "My friends are amazed that I still carry on a dialogue with a partner who declines to take part in it. The abuse to which he treats me from time to time certainly ignores that mutual give-and-take which he himself in his *Critique* acknowledges to be the highest ethical principle. . . . That doesn't discourage me. I have retained my youthful admiration for the extraordinary fertility of his mind . . . while remaining fully alive to his arrogant indifference towards careful verification and towards the proper use of reason. His outbursts of rage are far too excessive to affect me in any way. I accept him as he is, with his cult of violence and his extravagance. . . . The truth is that our starting points, our systems of reference, our mentors and our problems are to a large extent the same. Sartre presumably won't read my comments and won't try to understand them. So what? I have derived keen pleasure from the discourse with a partner who is at once both present and absent."

The polemical tradition which remains irrepressible in France—and partly consists in thinking that you haven't disposed of ideas until you have destroyed those who hold them—stretches from Joseph de Maistre to latter-day successors on both Right and Left (recently mostly on the Right again). Sartre paid homage to it, without ever really taking his own outbursts completely seriously, for here the playwright (and man of the theatre) came always to the fore.

This tradition was utterly foreign to Aron. In addition, he wanted those same people on the Left to listen to him; he wanted to convince them. In recent years, now that certain ideological battles have become a thing of the past, Aron's long-term influence has been making itself felt again. The "New Philosophers" were, most of them, Maoists in 1968. They branded Marx as a repressive thinker and his doctrine as "opium for intellectuals" (where did they get this idea from?). They referred back to Aron even if they didn't quote him. But in his last period even Sartre paid tribute to Russian dissidents, whom he had earlier declared to be a slanderous invention of the Western gutter press (in his comedy *Nekrassov*).

Aron wanted to teach, to instruct, to persuade, but he never sacrificed a nuance of his thought in order to gain approval. When Maurice Merleau-Ponty broke away from Sartre and the whole circle surrounding *Les Temps Modernes* and also revised his own Marxism of "humanism and terror" (in *Les Aventures de la dialectique*), Aron criticised this book in *Preuves* and entitled his essay "*Les Mésaventures de la dialectique.*" Merleau-Ponty had sought to establish a connecting link between Sartre's philosophy and his political aberrations, and Aron found these non-existent.

I AM WRITING THESE PAGES to mark Aron's death on 17 October. But even an extensive, more carefully considered essay could only be one testimony among others. His work is too varied. It alternates between intellectual stock-taking and academic methodology, between measured reflection and thoughts of the moment, between philosophical objectivity and political commitment. One glance at the bibliography in the two-volume *Festschrift* in honour of Aron, or the convenient appendix to his recently published *Mémoires*, is enough to demonstrate that. A critical survey would itself have to be of book length and would presuppose universal discernment. It may be best to stick to selected examples.

It struck me again and again—whether it was in two-page articles in *L'Express*, in two-volume works like *Clausewitz*, or

Raymond Aron
1905-1983

Whose memory will be honored
in every act of bravery
and in every wise defense of freedom

in **"Contentions"**, *edited by Midge Decter for the Committee for the Free World (New York).*

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in essays for the new periodical *Commentaire* founded by Aron himself—that here was an author who was never content merely to pass on his opinions but who tirelessly compiled and incorporated the widest and latest information. This scrupulous curiosity is a trait which distinguished Raymond Aron from other committed intellectuals of his generation (and also from occasionally more brilliant later writers, from Michel Foucault to the "*nouveaux philosophes*"). Aron puts forward theses but would never sacrifice the slightest detail to them, let alone overlook a counter-argument. He was indeed an ever-alert "spectator", eager to discern and dissect how we live and think now.

This is not to say that Raymond Aron wrote nothing but excellent books and far-sighted editorials. Neither he nor his friends would ever want to claim that. Like everyone who writes a lot for the moment, particularly in *Le Figaro* (which at that time, however, had no room for Aron's heretical views on Algeria), he has occasionally been wrong in his prognoses. Too often he heralded the imminent end of the Fifth Republic. Still, a study of Aron's journalism would be highly rewarding.

From the wealth of themes and fruitful suggestions I feel moved to mention especially Raymond Aron's commitment after 1945 to the complete reintegration of Germany into the international democratic community. His was a realistic appraisal of the facts, and he stood practically alone.

Aron's doubts about "reason in history"—he only concedes such a rationale to individuals, and among them only to those reasonable activists in politics—were finally confirmed by his experiences in Germany in 1933. His doubts about progress as a moral category were likewise confirmed by the peculiar "rationality" of the extermination of millions of people belonging to "inferior races", which was carried out with the highest industrial efficiency. But even before this Aron had refused to regard history as an agent of truth. Historical results incorporated neither a logic nor a law nor a moral value. Un-Teutonic as this surely was, Aron never overlooked the extent to which his own education and intellectual development was indebted to German thinkers (though it should be added that no debt was ever repaid more fruitfully). After 1945 Aron, both politically and personally, viewed the German nation, stateless as it was at the time, in a light which was by no means obvious just then.

Aron's essay "For a European Germany" appeared in June 1949 in the first issue of *Der Monat*, in which he wrote:

> "The attitude of the victors was not calculated to inspire immediate respect in the losers. . . . Hitler took it upon himself to conjure up the age of great invasions and of barbarism once again. One must at least admit that this age did not come to an end with the defeat of Hitler."

It should be the most important task of the Occupation authorities to open the borders and to re-establish human relations between individuals and between nations.

> "Let them tear down the prison walls, those built by Hitler and the one which sustains the memory of Hitler's crimes. For far too many years every nation has indulged in a bitter monologue. It is time for a dialogue to begin."

On 30 June 1950 Aron spoke before a group of students in Frankfurt. On that occasion he said: "I can't stick to the limited theme of 'Franco-German relations.' The entire situation of Europe as it emerged out of the Second World War is involved here." A "national unification of Germany", even through neutrality, might be deemed worthy of approval, but the sharp-eyed observer didn't think that such offers were meant seriously.

> "The Russian authorities are firmly installed in East Germany both militarily and politically, and it seems as though they have no intention of leaving. Reunification presupposes free elections in those regions which are at present called People's Democracies. Do you imagine that the Soviet authorities will run the risk of losing elections, 99% of which they have won already thanks to their tyrannical methods? . . . The German call for unity is legitimate, and it is also quite natural. But that is only part of the truth. We cannot accept the current division of Europe, but neither can we change it, at least for the moment."

The solution could take decades, and we are *now* looking back over more than 30 years.

> "You Germans are obviously distressed by the partition of your country. But the fundamental fact is not the partition of Germany; it is the partition of Europe. Eighteen million Germans are victims of the Stalinist system, but the Poles, the Czechs, and the Rumanians are not suffering any less just because they all ended up together on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. The question ought really to be put like this: Is it possible to end the partition of Germany without putting an end to the partition of Europe? My answer is: Unfortunately this is not likely."

Towards the end of this speech Aron made an observation which became depressingly topical again:

> "Anyone who has the sad duty of reading the press of both countries will be aware how easily emotions are aroused and how great the distance between their national outlooks remains. I belong to a generation which saw its task after the First World War as the soothing of feelings of hatred and the reconstruction of Europe. We carry within us the bitterness of our failure. We were not able to prevent the catastrophe. . . ."

And Aron called on his audience not to lose patience when faced with the trivialities of everyday life: no evanescent emotion and no vague idea ought ever to be the mainspring of our actions.

Aron always warned against illusions, against utopian wishful thinking. "Shaped by French university teachers"—he once wrote—"at the age of twenty I imagined the world other than it was, and then I discovered the reality of the Germany of 1933. . . . What cripples utopia is not our ignorance of the future, but our knowledge of the present."

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NOTES & TOPICS

Brecht: The Legend & the Man

By Ronald Hayman

PSYCHOANALYSIS could be of little interest to a man who was as indifferent to motivation as Brecht was, or as bored by the idea of individuality: "Do I have to waste time on the differences between one man and another?" he asked in 1921. "Strain my eyes?" But, judging from his annotations, he spent a lot of time on an essay by Wilhelm Reich about "Dialectical Materialism and Psycho-Analysis", which appeared in the October 1929 issue of *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*. Reich was looking at ways that opposites could unite in a phenomenon which would itself be turned into its opposite. The periodical also contained an essay by W. Adoratski—"Lenin über die Hegelsche Logik und Dialektik"; in an indented quotation from Hegel, Brecht underlined the phrase: "recognition of internal contradiction as driving forces for development."

Brecht's theatrical achievement rests on the techniques he evolved for uniting opposites and preserving discrepancies. Stanislavsky had tended to iron out inconsistencies for the sake of smooth flow towards the "Super-objective"; Brecht, both in his scripts and in his productions, moved away from cliché, stereotype and consistency by multiplying internal contradictions. Why should a King behave majestically? Why shouldn't Christy Mahon's sex-appeal depend less on physique and physiognomy than on his reputation as a killer? Brecht used to sit at rehearsals surrounded by production assistants who were encouraged to tell him whenever they disagreed with what was going on; objections contributed to a dialectic that enriched a production's texture.

Brecht did his best to carry the principle of contradiction into personal and political allegiances, even when it involved him in the risk that future biographers would accuse him of duplicity. When Wilhelm Pieck took office on 2 November 1949 as first President of the German Democratic Republic, Brecht saluted him with a poem titled "An meine Landsleute" ("To My Compatriots") though he was currently doing his best to become a citizen of Austria. "I repudiate the idea of repatriating myself in Germany", he had written six months earlier.

He had intended to open the Berliner Ensemble's first season with Nordahl Grieg's *Nederlaget* (*Defeat*) and he invited Erwin Piscator to direct this play about the Paris Commune of 1871. Brecht made the proposal without rereading the play, and when he did, he found it "astonishingly bad." Grieg blamed the Commune's failure on lack of effective leadership, whereas Brecht admired the uprising for being spontaneously collective. He instructed Weigel not to let anyone see the translation of *Nederlaget,* while, together with Ruth Berlau, he set about rewriting it as *Die Tage der Commune.* The director Erich Engel, who had been horrified by the plan to produce *Nederlaget,* was told that Brecht was reworking an old French play he had discovered.

In June 1953, after East Berlin building-workers, overstrained by arduous norms, found that their wages had been reduced, Brecht could not have been unaware that their rising was no less spontaneously collective than the one recreated in *Die Tage der Commune.* But there was no question of his supporting the rebels. Günter Grass could have written a better play than *Die Plebejer proben die Aufstand* (*The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*) if he had known how worried Brecht was at the time about whether the government would give him a theatre. The Berliner Ensemble had been formed in 1949, but it was still sharing the Deutsches Theater, appearing there three evenings a week. The Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, which was occupied by the Volksbühne, had been promised to the Ensemble as soon as the Volksbühne could be accommodated in the new theatre which was under construction. At the beginning of 1949, Brecht had told Caspar Neher they would be installed in the Schiffbauerdamm in time for the autumn season; in the summer of 1953 he was anxious about the attitude of the government: news of his strained relations with it had leaked into West German newspapers. By the middle of June he must have known that the dissidence of the building workers was likely to precipitate a crisis in which his support could be particularly valuable to the régime, and on the 15th he wrote to Grotewohl. Surely, he suggested, the best way to quash "these nonsensical rumours of discord" would be to announce that the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm was to be taken over by the Berliner Ensemble. On the 17th, the day of the rising, he wrote to Ulbricht, Grotewohl and Semionov, political adviser in the Soviet Central Committee, expressing his support for the Party. If Ulbricht wanted to speak on the

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radio, Brecht suggested, the programme could begin and end with songs and readings by Ernst Busch and other members of the Ensemble.

THE HABIT of double-dealing was deeply ingrained. In 1921 he was intending to marry Paula Banholzer, the mother of his two-year-old son, Frank, but he did not want Marianne Zoff, the opera singer who was pregnant by him, to have an abortion. It was as bad as killing a child, he told her. In his diary he wrote: "She's getting used, *lento,* to the idea of having the child on her own. That's where I want her." But he had to face an unexpected challenge when Marianne and Paula joined forces to confront him. They made him sit down between them, saying he must make a choice. Which of them did he want? Both, he said. At which they both walked away. But when he found, afterwards, that Paula was on the same train from Munich to Augsburg, he beckoned her out into the corridor and proposed a contractual arrangement. He would marry Marianne to make the baby legitimate and then divorce her to marry Paula. She let herself be coaxed into accepting a written agreement which could have no legal force. Later, when Marianne miscarried, he was livid, and he worked out a complicated scheme to "give" her Frank.

Like the Good Woman of Setzuan, Brecht had difficulty in reconciling the divine commandment "Be good to other people" with the divine commandment "Be good to yourself." He was not altogether impervious to guilt feelings, but instead of letting them curb the freedom he gave himself to exploit other people, he used them to enrich the texture of his writing. Consciousness of double-dealing may have contributed to the evolution of such dual characters as Shen Te and Puntila, and to his cultivation of ambiguity. After Stalin died, Brecht's guarded tribute was: "When they heard that Stalin was dead, it must have stopped the heartbeats of the oppressed in five continents—those who have already been liberated and those who fight for world peace. He was the incarnation of their hopes. But the intellectual and material weapons he created are still there, and there is the teaching, to be recreated." Brecht had never put his mastery of irony to better political use. This was three months before the June rising; in the play he wrote immediately after it, *Turandot oder die Kongresse der Weisswäscher,* one of the main themes was the difference between good lying and bad lying: the whitewashers are Western intellectuals who write apologias for capitalism. In so far as he was still capable of sincerity, Brecht sincerely believed that more genuine freedom was to be found in the Soviet-dominated countries than in the West, but as a virtuoso of ambiguity, he must have understood that the play could be viewed as a statement about the whitewashing of actions committed in the name of Communism. Perhaps the work sprouted from a grain of unease about the Russian soldiers who machine-gunned strikers for throwing stones at the People's Police.

KLAUS VÖLKER'S BIOGRAPHY OF Brecht tells some of the truth about his ruthlessness towards women, translators and collaborators, but, as Martin Esslin showed in his review (ENCOUNTER, December 1977), the book is not objective or even honest in its account of Brecht's political behaviour. Völker glosses over the régime's reasons for suppressing *Der Herrnburger Bericht,* Brecht's attack on Adenauer's government for wanting to restrict freedom of movement between the two halves of Germany. Völker distorts Brecht's reaction to the death of his Russian friend Tretiakov, a victim of Stalin's purges, while the notorious remark to Sidney Hook—"The more innocent they are, the more they deserve to die"—is explained as an attempt to shock an American intellectual who was lacking in political insight. Emulating his subject in following the dictates of expediency, Völker has produced a book which does more to perpetuate a legend than to reveal the biographical facts.

Not that it is easy to disentangle them from the thickets of fiction that have grown around them. The first of the legend-makers was Brecht himself. Most tyro writers are excited by the possibility of telling the truth about themselves; for Brecht, from the beginning, the main pleasure seems to have been in the power he could gain by writing and by singing his verses to his own guitar accompaniment, which helped him to win the devotion of male and female friends. From the early ballad "Vom armen B.B." to his 1955 speech on his acceptance of the Lenin Peace Prize, the autobiographical statements he made are full of distortions, and even today, over 25 years after his death, the legend is supported by witnesses who sometimes contradict themselves and often contradict each other.

He liked actors and never screamed at them, says Heinz Schubert. He often screamed at them, says Ekkehard Schall, but he could do it without losing his temper. Weigel had no sense of humour and Brecht was always complaining about her, says Heinz Kuckhahn, who knew them in the early thirties. She had a sense of humour, says Manfred Wekwerth, the present director of the Ensemble, but it was very different from Brecht's. He was frightened of Ernst Busch, says Wekwerth, who was made to deliver written criticisms of Busch's performances; he was frightened of no one, says Käthe Rülicke. According to Hans Bunge, Ruth Berlau suggested a lot of ideas for *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis,* and he incorporated nearly all of them while accepting none from Weigel. According to Barbara Schall-Brecht, he accepted nearly all of Weigel's and rejected all of Berlau's.

WHEN I MET BRECHT in 1956, a few months before he died, he was like a weary old abbot, patiently explaining points of doctrine to a potential convert. No charisma. It was clear that people would seldom get bored in this man's company, but it was hard to see how he had inspired so much devotion from both men and women. When he was alive, the devotion survived the most obnoxious behaviour, and it has now survived his death. Elisabeth Bergner, whose professional relations with him were far from smooth, keeps a statuette of him on her piano and caresses it affectionately; younger women, who knew him intimately, go on subscribing to the legend. Käthe Rülicke assured me piously that when he and Langhoff were sharing the Deutsches Theater, they never quarrelled.

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One of the most interesting witnesses is his younger brother, Professor Walter Brecht, who was 82 when I met him but did not look much older than Brecht did at 58. We sat on the terrace of Walter's house in Darmstadt, and the conversation was backed by chiming bells and gun-like bangs as ripe nuts fell to the pavement. Shy? No, Brecht was never shy, though he sometimes used the semblance of shyness as a means of keeping people at a distance. Up to the age of sixteen, he was never anti-religious, never anti-bourgeois; all his friends were from the best middle-class circles. From the beginning, he found it easy to impress, liked to dominate, and felt entitled to use other people. He was a bad loser. He could quickly master a new game or a new technique. At different times he learned piano, violin and guitar, but soon got bored with practising. He was impatient with activities (such as washing) that brought no gratification.

He had considerable sympathy for the maid, who had to work all round the clock for twelve marks a year, but in general he had little respect for people with no possessions. He had a strong commercial instinct. Together the brothers would collect chestnuts and sell them in the town on market days. But Brecht had little time for boys of his own age, preferring the company of his seniors. From the beginning, their mother knew that Eugen—he would reject his childhood name, as he would reject his childhood—was "different." He was never robust, never enjoyed eating, seemed more in need of parental protection. (Later he would make friends feel they had to give him preferentially protective treatment.) Walter was ousted from the attic room they at first shared, but he denies that he ever felt jealous and claims that Brecht was proud of him "as an *Ordinarius*." He stayed in Germany through the War and never went, during his brother's lifetime, to see any productions by the Berliner Ensemble, but he wanted to attend the funeral.

He was on holiday when the news reached him, and he couldn't get a flight to arrive in time. "They would have had to wait for one hour, and they would not wait. Not for his only brother! 'The authorities', she said."

Rough Trade at Westminster

Parliamentary Politics—By EDWARD PEARCE

FOR MY SINS, and for money, I spend a number of months every year sitting in the gallery of the House of Commons looking down on politicians, in more ways than one; and attempting to extract from the first three-and-a-half hours of the day's play something for the solace next day of uneasy 8 a.m. stomachs before they turn to the latest killings in the Lebanon or the most recent defeat of the British citizen at the hands of the EEC Farmers' Fund. In the process it is impossible not to become fascinated by the game taking place in that Chamber nor to develop views about the quality of those playing it.[1]

While one is aware of many follies and absurdities, serious judgments about cameral politics also develop. Under the British system Government and Opposition (or oppositions) sit facing each other, something which the Alliance parties deplore. They favour the Congressional pattern, also used by the diets of the European continental states, where politicians sit in loops or horseshoes, either on a random basis or from *physical* left to right as an expression of *political* Left and Right. Naively, they deplore what are called "adversarial politics." Even more naively they attribute this state of affairs to the demography of the Chamber. "Get the carpenters in", said David Steel, leader (for as long as he can bear it) of the splintering and quarrelsome Liberal Party whose own internal haemorrhages ought to be evidence enough that unity is not achieved by rearranging furniture.

The same instinct which dislikes the facing seats dislikes the rough political combat which is waged from them. British politics are on the whole more robust than those of her neighbours. And Westminster's great virtue is that it tests politicians outside their offices. If a Minister cannot cope with a rough mob from central casting bawling at him, then he needs more protection and warm winter wraps than he is worth.

Politicians are given, in Continental countries and in the institutions of the EEC especially, altogether more reverence and respect than is good for them. The German tradition of *Exzellenz* and *Eminenz* contributes mightily to the creation of a caste of men for whom doors are opened, paths smoothed, and new forms of sycophancy explored. We British like to kick our politicians about: not enough, admittedly, but we try. We let them live in a palace but only on condition they work in corridors and inhabit cupboards. One politician, a few years back, showing off his modest office as Deputy Defence Minister, indicated a schoolboy's desk pushed against a wall. "My PPS [Parliamentary Private Secretary] has to manage with that", he said. The PPS was David Owen!

[1] So much so that when I expanded my daily lampoon into a book, *The Senate of Lilliput,* I subsequently learned that the bookshop at Conservative Central Office refused to handle something which was "offensive to Members of Parliament"—quite the nicest thing anyone has ever said about me.

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Kept short of money, not encouraged to be full-time politicians (though alas they itch to be just that), denied elaborate research facilities, subjected to re-selection and generally ranked with those who live to please and please to live, British politicians are kept in mind of the transient nature of their glory.

In the Chamber they are trained to keep the iron from the guts not only by the broad antipathy of the other side but by specialised *Schutzgruppen* of parliamentary hard men, political footpads whose delight it is to reduce the carriage trade to spitting incoherence. It is very good for politics that this humanoid obstacle-course should exist. The best Ministers sharpen their talent on such adversarial encounters: John Biffen, the floor leader, with gentle elegance; Thomas King, after earlier stumbles, by turning and vehemently counter-attacking; and Norman Fowler, who is not a naturally good speaker, by coming to debate heavily armed with facts. All these have recently handled the House extremely effectively.

Correspondingly, the reputation of Roy Jenkins went into vertical decline on his return to the Commons. Jenkins as a Minister, before he went to Europe as President of the EEC Commission, had been a force at the dispatch box. Briefed and backed by the Party claque, the opponent of adversarial politics had been a fairly adept adversarial politician. Opinions differ as to the reasons for the Fall of Roy. But if an inability to manage without morale-sustaining support from a large party was a factor, much more important was the debilitating effect of life as a quaestor of the shadow Empire in Brussels.

DEMOCRACY IS NOT a West European habit. The roots are shallow in those countries which over the last 200 years have known Imperial and Royal power, Bonapartism, clerical authoritarianism, and the movements of Boulanger, Mussolini, Pétain, Franco and Maurras, to omit only the grossest example of the continental tradition.

In a continent where General de Gaulle and his "*Rassemblement*" could pass as a democratic force, the strangled combination of autocracy and impasse which is the European Commission is acceptable. The politicians who go to it are not likely to be improved by the experience. It gratifies urges which politicians have and which wise societies deny them—grandeur, freedom from being answered back, all the expectations of a Court Minister under an absolutist crown (even if the quarrels which prevent the European proto-state from maturing blessedly frustrate some of those expectations).

The British system, though it is so much less of a democracy than it should be, has the virtue of being based on disrespect. Ideally, the successful politician is neither a piazza-ranter nor a servant of the State, but a parliamentarian, a cameral politician. I say "ideally" with emphasis, for there are few enough real powers left to the British House of Commons. Party power, expressed through the Whips, is enormous. Patronage and punishment both loom for the individual Member as he contemplates stepping out of line. Parties are, indeed, excessively like regiments in their organisation, and like countries in the degree of loyalty they exact. Anthony Wedgwood Benn was only faintly colouring reality when he demanded an oath of fealty, for Tory Whips think in much the same way as Mr Benn unwisely speaks. Promotion is through the Commons. Those who rebel—unless they rebel very succesfully—can expect exclusion by Whips advising the Prime Minister on his choice of Ministers. Harold Wilson's remark about the dog being allowed two bites (before being put down) was, like Mr Benn's observation, only a mild exaggeration.

Accordingly, we have a class of politician who candidly despises the House of Commons. A certain junior Whip has been very eloquent on the worthlessness of life as a representative of the people in that interim before the golden day when "one has office." We are therefore obliged to keep MPs busy or happy, possibly both. The first part is easy enough. New Members have reported themselves astonished at the amount of constituency work coming their way (much of which reflects the incapacity of local councils). And it is fair to say that most of these newcomers are probably better, more conscientious MPs than the Members of ten years ago. The negligent clubman survives, but more and more on the margin.

HAPPINESS IS another matter. MPs know (or very swiftly learn) that as backbenchers they have no power to do, no power to stop, only the opportunity to perform before influential persons with notebooks containing little lists.

From this state of affairs is born the happy sycophant, of which lamentable breed the new Chairman of the Conservative Party is the outstanding example. John Selwyn Gummer has the address of a Southern Baptist preacher adapted and restyled to fit the circumstances of the English Tory Party. He has brought zeal to the Coffee Morning! "Come to Jesus" was subtly (well, not subtly then) amended as "Come to Ted" when the Boy Gummer was barely thirty. And, without a quiver of self-reproach, it became "Come to Margaret" as the parliamentary answer to Hilaire Belloc's "Cautionary Tale" of Charles Augustus Fortescue ("the nicest child I ever knew") made his glutinous and dreadful way.

But since all MPs cannot be Gummer, other devices for inducing happiness and the delusion of utility are attempted. Incidentally, the idea of them all being like Gummer is at present only a glint in the technologist's eye; it is political science fiction and thus capable of being fulfilled. It promises a Parliament of Stepford Wives, stripped of their innards, sprayed with plastic, equipped with a standard and computerised vocabulary, and very very happy. The Whips should beware of this delight. It would spell the start of redundancy for a body of men as proud in their way of old coercive traditions as the *Guardia Civil* in Spain.

Instead, what we have now is a series of hamster-wheels called Select Committees. They do not change policy or challenge the executive. But by bringing groups of Members with pet subjects for sustained question-and-answer sessions with a Minister and his senior Civil Servants, the Select Committee is a device for simulating utility in backbenchers. Nothing has been given away yet, nothing which was not intended *will* be given away. But in the process the hungry legislature is given a sniff of the banquet prepared for the executive. Whether this will promote phantom nutrition and

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thus content among the starving masses, or give them an angry notion of what they are missing, is a matter for the judgment of those who thought up this heavy-handed con.

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN the sterile game of Question Time and the daring new experiment of Select Committees is that one has historical precedence over the other. It is also the case that although Question Time is intended to reveal nothing which is not capable of being more deftly promoted by that highly constitutional device, the leak, it does at least expose the Minister of the Crown to a little unarmed combat, and keeps him in mind of the disrespect in which great men are shockingly often held.

In this one respect Question Time (along with debate, no matter how certain the vote) is of real account. It does nothing for issues, but it tests men. A politician of the wooden Indian sort, incapable of improvisation, innocent of personality, resentfully present, repeating often what he cannot explain, is in some measure found out. A shifty and dishonest fellow has a healthy way of looking shifty and dishonest. Nor does the system unduly favour the merely facile at the expense of virtuous if rather heavy men. Until very recently I would have argued that Sir Geoffrey Howe, as a man born for office and not intended by nature for street credibility, had done remarkably well in the House by setting his own pace (roughly that of the mills of God, and we all know what they do). Sweet reason dropping slow in statistical form worked very nicely as long as Sir Geoffrey was at the Treasury. Alas, given his shift to the Foreign Office, and trapped by the Government's own incoherence in response to the invasion of Grenada, he was taken apart by the old hill-bandit, Denis Healey, and distributed to the winds.

BUT THAT WAS A REFLECTION not just on Sir Geoffrey's parliamentary style, which resembles the grave of the Unknown British Heavyweight, but on the ineptitude of his Department and, on this occasion, of the Prime Minister. Those Ministers who, though rather dull in manner, are also expert and good at their subject—like Kenneth Baker, our man in fibre optics—win respect without benefit of any of the qualities which have made Mr Healey what he is. Debate and questions also find out the Opposition. We are all trying to make up our minds here about Neil Kinnock. Do his youth and personal attractiveness amount to a force sufficient to do Labour any good? How far can charisma go without visible means of support?

He has scored one modest point by producing a newspaper picture of Mrs Thatcher chatting to the estimable Mr Eddie Shah of the *Stockport Messenger* Group, and by drawing the unvoiced inference that our recent Police/Trade Union confrontation may have been arrived at by conspiracy in front of 400 guests at a cocktail party. It was, as Conservatives indignantly assert, a cheap trick. But it stopped her dead, and the Prime Minister is in business as the unstoppable lady. Even so, it made up only 20% of the ground lost by Mr Kinnock's non-performance the day before, when he was pressed to take a line on trade-union violence and illegal secondary picketing.

"Up, up, up, up", said the Tory backbenchers. Mr Kinnock was caught between a desire not to renege on a trade union and his understanding that Labour must put furlongs between itself and the coercive brutal image (and truth) of that union.

Parliament, like the good theatre of improvisation it is, set up for him the one option and the other. He flinched from both, and fell off the stage. Bruised and waving a newspaper, he has scrambled back on. The process of learning—about Neil Kinnock and for Neil Kinnock—has got under way in our best, rough, British tradition. Parliament, with all its Potemkin characteristics, for all the power it has not, does ultimately function as a form of quality control modified by hilarity.

Letter from Lisbon

Does Iberia Exist?

By Sanchez Oliveira

IT WAS a gleaming photograph of a radiant pair, and small wonder that it made the newspapers the world over—two Prime Ministers of two ex-fascist lands, Felipe Gonzalez of Spain and Mário Soares of Portugal, both stalwart men of the democratic blue-jeaned leather-jacketed Left, both swallowing a bit of their old "proletarian pride" by appearing in immaculate evening dress, black tie and satin-lapelled dinner jacket. It represented a kind of a sartorial victory as they met to try and improve relations; conferences have broken down on account of less—the shape of a table, the placing of a flag. Dress and concessions to formal protocol do have a certain importance. (For decades in Bonn the most powerful Social Democrat in party and parliament, Herbert Wehner, refused to wear anything else to even the grandest functions but his ordinary, working, herringbone suit. . . .)

But it would seem that traditional class attitudes and old-fashioned ideological prejudices are infinitely easier to move and dislodge than the far deeper national psychologies based on bitter historical tragedies which régimes and peoples have experienced. If the two energetic and enlightened socialists, Gonzales and Soares, thought they could "build Socialism in one peninsula" they came away (despite the dinner-party smiles) bitterly disappointed men. Frustration and stagnation were the real agenda of the day. The time-consuming issues of the Lisbon conference were all small and detailed—whether fishing rights off coastal waters, a coordinated approach to the European Community, or whatever. Nothing visible to the

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naked eye was achieved. Notable only were a tiny understanding about the distribution of wave-lengths for amateur radio-hams, some improved sanitary rules about animals along the frontier, and a new bridge over the Rio Miño. For the rest, there was stalemate, and the suspicious and very negative Portuguese even refused to have the conference referred to as "*Iberian*." Iberia does not, or not yet, exist.

It was the Spaniards, of course, who took away with them the bullish share of the disappointment, and before their departure I heard open criticism of the deficient Portuguese approach to any kind of give-and-take compromise. The harsh fact of the matter is that in Portugal today, as in the past, a hard-core animosity against the "big brother" obtains. Mário Soares has doubtless tried valiantly to work up a "new atmosphere", a "change in trend"; but he had to concede in the end (in an interview with the Madrid paper, *El Pais*) that the historic distrust remains virulent and that, therefore, it might be best to try and make only very small steps forward and to give up hopes for "imaginative projects" and an enthusiastic turning-point. Indignation had exploded when one Portuguese poll actually suggested that some 26% were in favour of a "political union with Spain." A little more calmness set in when a second poll was quickly organised and it resulted in a more modest 11%.

IN ANY CASE the mutual ignorance that reigns in the relations between the two Iberian nations is vast and almost unbelievable. Historians have often noted that the two lands live with their backs to each other. An opinion poll also revealed that only 29% of the Portuguese knew that Spain was a monarchy (23% thought it a republic; 38% said they didn't know). As a result every suggestion or proposal coming from Madrid smacks of unknown dangers—"paternalism" at its best, new "Empire-building" at its worst. The hope that the Spaniards and Portuguese could work together in a "Customs Union" along the Benelux model was relegated to the file-and-forget bin of overly-imaginative projections. Even the subject of "improving cultural relations" was haggled over for hours, for "culture" in politics and diplomacy is a well-known Trojan horse.

The Portuguese, especially in the circles of conservative older generations, still entertain vivid fears of a "Spanish invasion", of little Portugal being swallowed up. "Iberian" is for them only a *newspeak*-Orwellian word for their national extinction. An old Lisbon proverb has it that "out of Spain comes nothing but ill winds, and not even an acceptable offer of marriage. . . ." So it is that the tourist is struck by the fewness of the roads which link the two lands. Gonzales appealed for an end to old suspicions and the devising of new links. But the *Raia*, the strip along the border, belongs, on both sides, to the poorest and most underpopulated areas. And even when both régimes belonged to the authoritarian Right, quite isolated in a liberal Western Europe, there were almost no real attempts at friendly cooperation on the part of the dictators. To be sure, since the end of the Franco and Salazar eras there have been more "contacts"; and these began, to some extent, in the underground struggles of the "comradely anti-fascists"; and indeed the Portuguese president of Parliament, Tito de Moraes, an "old fighter" for the good cause, went out of his way to praise the "young anti-fascist" Gonzales. As a matter of fact when the Portuguese "revolution of the carnations" took place in 1974 it had given the Spaniards new confidence, and many made a pilgrimage to the new democracy across their frontiers.

Still, these remain the passing events of a day or a year. When one looks closer the estrangement remains deep, and bridgeable only with the greatest of efforts. Thus, despite the relationship between the two languages, neither is taught in the schools of the other. My impression has been that the Portuguese manage to understand the Spaniards adequately enough; but spoken Portuguese presents rather an insuperable problem for the Spanish-speaker. In Madrid's bookshops I note that many Spanish translations have been made of recent works published in Lisbon, but I suspect the impact has not been very substantial. In Portugal the considerable body of modern Spanish literature, its poetry and novels, has remained quite unknown.

ONE OTHER element may be playing a role in "Iberian" relations, and that is the shadow of "1492", that classic date of new overseas discoveries, conquests, and the carving-out of colonial empires in the New World. Spain has been busy preparing the programme for an ambitious celebration of the 500th jubilee, and one wonders whether either the Portuguese or the Latin Americans will quite enjoy their assigned roles in the festivities.

> "On the 500th anniversary of the landing of Spanish ships on the island called Hispanola, Spanish will be spoken by some 500 million people in some 20 different countries where our language is the mother tongue. . . ."

This was the ringing cry of Felipe Gonzales at a notable conference in Madrid earlier this year. Although the Portuguese were present, and Soares made a speech, I am not sure how satisfactory the whole approach was, what with the "Declaration of Madrid" being edited by the Spanish-writing, Nobel-Prize-winner Gabriel García Márquez and the Spaniards taking over the whole of the financing and organisation. Colonialism may be dead, but there may still be a future for the Empire of the Spanish tongue. In any event there are still a few traditional enemies who can still usefully inspire strong feelings of Iberian solidarity. "Ibero-America" needs to be saved from "the cultural and linguistic hegemony" of the English-speaking powers. Nor did the resounding phrases of the Gonzales-Márquez manifesto ignore another old rival to the North, namely the French; and it was to France that Minister Guerra obviously addressed his rather belated and doubtless anachronistic warning that Spain "would not allow any other country to take over the protagonist's role in Hispano-America. . . ." Meanwhile, Spanish foreign policy, flashing its new democratic credentials, has been busying itself in the affairs of the Contadora countries in Central America (Panama, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela)—and in the alter-

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cations of El Salvador and Nicaragua—flying its new flag as a defender of freedom.

ALL IN ALL, THEREFORE, the "Iberian" difficulties are easily explicable. Felipe Gonzales wants to be known as a friend of Portugal, and wants to build new roads to join the countries. But this is what he was told by General Eanes, the Portuguese President (who himself comes from the *Raia* along the Spanish border): ". . . I know you're not having an easy time of it with us Portuguese. When Spaniards talk badly about us, we get angry. When you talk nicely about us we, or at least many of us, suspect that behind the mask of hypocrisy one can spot an evil glint in the Spanish eye. And if you don't talk about us at all, then obviously we have yet another example of old Spanish arrogance and negligence. . . ."

Indifference in Spain is the main response to the Portuguese question. One hears so often remarks to the effect that the "nice little Portuguese" shouldn't be taken too seriously. Are opportunities here being lost? Both Soares and his predecessor, Francisco Balsemão, are constructive international-minded democrats; but doubtless the enlightened élite is not quite representative. In foreign affairs, now conducted by Minister Gama, there is the traditional cultivation of "non-Iberian distance", which occasionally breaks out in argumentation and polemics between Madrid and Lisbon (as in the case of the Gama-Moran exchanges over a few unfortunate rhetorical phrases). Suddenly editors start recalling that one of Gama's predecessors—this during the dictatorship—had written an inflammatory book (an utterly absurd pamphlet) which warned against allegedly imminent plans for a Spanish invasion of Portugal.

MUCH OF THIS MUTUALLY reinforcing resentment can be put down to the "great game of politics" as conducted by two traditionally wary establishments. My feeling is that it is true when liberal critics claim that the "common people", Portugal's poor, etc., are relatively free from such conventional mistrust and are indeed "Spain-friendly." If I may refer to yet another public-opinion poll (this time *Expresso*'s) without fear of being contradicted by a rival poll of a rival newspaper, it would appear that a majority consider the two peoples to be "very much alike", and the friendly cooperation between the two Iberian nations "could only bring advantages." This is a rare burst of popular common sense. For the rest, at the moment, there are quarrels, suspicions, fears. Will not the more powerful Spanish economy "over-protect" the Portuguese? How can the Portuguese fishermen cope with the size and power of the Spanish fishery fleet? And, as I write, how can one trust the other when one (or the other) is so dependent on the United States and its arms supplies? Each claims, fatuously, to be "more independent" than the other. Neither is, really.

One day, soon perhaps, there will be an outburst of "Iberian" realism. But Iberia does not yet exist.

Report from Yugoslavia

Of Theory & "Praxis"

IT has been a long time—some nine years—since the sociologists of Yugoslavia last convened themselves in an academic congress. Why has there been such a long pause?

SUPEK: We last met in 1974, and within a year a scandal broke. I was at that time President of the association of social scientists, and I was summarily removed—at the order of the Yugoslav Communist Party's director of the central committee, Todo Kurtovic. This was ascribed to a certain work I had prepared for our philosophy summer-school at Korcula. The *Praxis* group's members of the Belgrade faculty were also removed from office. It was clearly an intervention of the politicians into the academy, into science. The association thereafter was in the hands of characters (like Fuad Muhic from Bosnia) who weren't sociologists at all but only carriers of political instructions and actually operated against the interests of research and social studies. Under such conditions, Yugoslavia's sociologists couldn't, and wouldn't, work.

It was at the time a kind of re-Stalinisation of our political life. The ideological line is, accordingly, always more important than academic qualifications and scientific results. And today there are indeed politicians who want to sharpen the line—although there are to be sure others who feel that, in the present critical situation of the nation, we ought to be dealt with more reasonably. The result was that we could meet in Portorz recently in a rather good atmosphere, and I can only hope that we will be able to get together in a similar spirit in the future.

—The theme of your Congress was "Integration and Disinte-

RUDI SUPEK *(who is now 70) is the veteran Yugoslav leader of the so-called "Praxis" group which has been trying valiantly to reform, revise, liberalise. We met him in the 1960s when he was hopeful, in the '70s when he was despondent (and on the verge of arrest); now he looks back on the struggle with a mixture of optimism and pessimism. The vital question remains: Is a totalitarian system, especially a "Titoist" one (which has the special advantages of having been born in heresy, nurtured on anti-Stalinism sentiments, and benefiting from Western aid), capable of real and lasting regeneration from within? . . .*

CARL GUSTAF STROEHM *(who conducted this interview with Professor Supek) lives in Vienna and reports on Eastern Europe and the Balkans, writing regularly for "Die Welt" (Bonn).*

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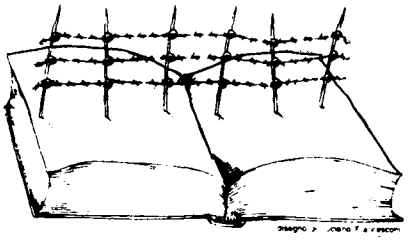
gration in Yugoslav Society." Which disintegrative forces did you mean?

SUPEK: We are part of a conflict, an antagonism between the functions of power and the functions of participation. Power increasingly becomes a disintegrative factor. As a matter of fact we have in Yugoslavia the same difficulties as the countries of "real socialism" in Communist Eastern Europe, although their "model of organisation" happens to be rather different from ours. Theirs is an *étatiste* system, and we are trying to live and work according to the principles of self-administration. But what has come about is the development of a kind of "decentralised Statism." The centres of state power are increasingly remote from the will of the people, and a *Nomenklatura* has grown up which nullifies any kind of democratic mechanism. In the matter of leaders and leadership, the so-called cadres, a species of "negative selection" has been at work. The politicians were eager to make use of precisely those persons who were ready and willing to function against the interests of their own professional groups and associations. At our recent

Poet in Prison: A Report from Belgrade



Belgrade

ACCORDING *to the official Yugoslav terminology they are all "enemies of the socialist system", "opportunists", and sometimes "anarcho-liberals." They have been meeting every Monday (today for the seventh time) and crowd themselves into the rooms of the Serbian Writers Club in Belgrade's "French Street." They have been numbering about 200, and the meetings last some two hours—up to about 40 authors have come forward to speak or to read from their works.*

THE POINT WAS TO MAKE **a protest against the imprisonment of one of their colleagues, the poet Gojko Djogo, who was first sentenced to two, and then on appeal, to one year, because he (at least in the eyes of the Party) had published in his book "Woolly Times", a collection of his poems, lines which denigrated Tito.**

FOR A WHILE *it had appeared that the authorities would not go ahead with the carrying-out of the sentence. The controversy has been raging for two years now (since he was first arrested in May 1981), but on 28 March Djogo's sentence was official and final; and since then the Writers Club has been the scene of the Monday protest meetings. Djogo himself, following a nervous breakdown, was put into the Padinskoy Skeli prison near Belgrade. Last Monday the rumours were that the poet was suffering from bleeding ulcers, a consequence of the excitements and nervous tensions, and had been placed in an intensive ward of a Belgrade surgical clinic. He was still being guarded by uniformed police—until the chief doctor of the clinic also protested, and they changed into civilian clothes. The latest bulletin is that his general situation is too weak to allow for an operation.*

THESE MONDAY MEETINGS **in the Serbian Writers Club seem to have been of special concern to the authorities. What usually happened when somebody was considered by the Party to be an "oppositionist" was a quiet case of house arrest, a confinement to quarters where, at best, a few academic-scientific discussions were allowed to take place. The fate of the poet Djogo has taken the dissidents out of their isolation; into the open came the deputy director of the Academy of Science, Antonije Isaković, the professor of philosophy, Mihailo Marković, and the writer Slobodan Selenić. What they and their colleagues have achieved is a certain public consolidation of "oppositionists." One of the group of philosophers, Vojislav Stojanović, charged that the Yugoslav judiciary was a dependency of the Party, and that the real punishment for "political" misdemeanours was controlled by a small circle of high Party functionaries.**

In another contribution to the Monday meetings, a lawyer (Ivan Janković) who had spent a month in jail for having taken part in an open demonstration in support of Polish **Solidarity**, *reported on his experience behind bars. He spoke of the systematic degradation of human dignity, of the beatings and the corruption, of fear and violence, all taken together forming the basis of prison "discipline." A poet (Draguljub Ignjatović) recited a poem entitled "The Great Magician", making direct reference to Djogo's poem, "The Great Black God", which was taken by certain Party functionaires to be a slur against the late Marshal Tito.*

Djogo himself wrote, when first arrested, an essay about his own poetry in which he said that his theme was "fear" and his verse infected with "the worst disease of the epoch. . . . Ask the philosophers, psychiatrists, sociologists, priests, ask yourselves, and you'll see: No period in history has induced so much fear as has ours. *Angst*, **of gas-chambers, of Hiroshima. . . . I too am afraid, and I speak out in order to free myself from fear."**

THE ALLEGED SLUR *has had one surprising result: namely, raising the ideological question of how long the Tito Cult is to be maintained. Each year, for example, there is still the old Tito-inspired "Youth Relay" which tours all the regions of the country for several months. It is an expensive spectacle, costing unbelievable millions; and critics bemoan its "low level" ("no longer really representative", they say, "of the cultural level we've now reached"). Serbian intellectuals have drawn up a petition to abolish the whole affair.*

The public protests in Serbia may cause one to overlook the situation in Croatia where the "oppositionists" were dealt with massively—in order, indeed, to prevent the emergence in the post-Tito period of just such a permissive atmosphere as reigns in Belgrade these days. Recent sentences have been severe; on the poet Vlado Gotovać, the student Dobroslav Paraga, the scientist Marko Veselica. (The 28-year-old sociologist, Milan Soklić, has, according to an official statement in the Tanjug press agency, been sentenced to five years for "anti-State activity." The court found him guilty of appealing for the overthrow of the régime; among other incriminating quotes were that Yugoslavia is ruled with an iron hand, that elementary human rights are denied, and that a capitalist system would be better for Yugoslavia.) A note of relaxation was struck in the case of the historian and ex-Partisan General Franjo Tudgman, who was too ill to be incarcerated. If Djogo's health declines further the popular protests may well become disorderly.

IN THE SERBIAN LEADERSHIP *there seems to be no unanimity about the tough attitude against Djogo, even though the hard-liners (as in the dismissal of the* **Politika** *editor-in-chief, Trajlović) have got their way. Among them is the old Tito loyalist, General Nikolai Ljubicić, formerly Defence Minister and Serbian President. It is well known that he often interfered with a censor's blue-pencil in the editing of* **Politika**; *and he remains a defender of the Tito Cult.*

Some joy for the "opposition" comes with the resignation of the Court judge in the Djogo case. Venijamin Pejović has expressed his "shame" at having followed Party orders to sentence the poet to two years. He intends to return to private law practice.

H.F.

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Congress we could spot several of these types, although none of them came forward to speak during the proceedings.

So we now have an absolutely negative approach to cadres, to representative leadership. Yugoslavia, which in the 1950s showed so many positive signs of healthy development, has retrogressed, and has fallen back into very low productivity and perhaps the highest inflation rate in Europe.

—How serious a problem is it, this failure of communication between politicians and the academic élite, the scientists, sociologists, et al.?

SUPEK: There was a time when relations were pretty good. We would receive subventions for our research institutes and our scientific work. In the 1970s a certain wave of Nationalism hit a high point and the time of reckoning came for whatever forces of liberalism there were. How liberal had we become? Well, the first big step had been the dissolution of the Party schools and the creation of faculties for political science at the universities. This meant a general strengthening of the tendency that the scientists should help create opportunities for socialism—and not be at the service of a dogmatic ideology. Now the tide is, as I say, flowing in the opposite direction. The academic faculties for social studies are being purged and liquidated, and Party schools are being re-established. There are now special efforts being made to enable these Party schools to award Master's degrees and even PhDs, although their educational programme is below any proper academic standard.

This amounts to a negative course of a new ideologisation. Not even in the Soviet-Communist East have such directions been taken, for they know very well that without science there can be no flourishing technology, and without technology no industry (and without industry no armament). With us in Yugoslavia both science and technology are suffering from absolute neglect. What we do is to import our technology: which is to say that a commercial mentality is at work, not a creative scientific one.

—Do you see a way out of the troubles?

SUPEK: We will simply have to return to the normal criteria of a functioning society. Which is to say that we must guarantee a working basis for the normal role of science, technology, and the professional associations. The selection of our cadres, our leaders and representatives, must be a positive process—and that is only possible with an increasing democratisation of our society. Surely this must begin in the Yugoslav Communist Party itself. When elections are held for Party leaders there must be secret ballots which include several candidates for the various posts. If this were to be instituted, certain politicians who speak loudly and make big decisions would fall by the wayside. These are the negative personalities who make their way constantly to the top, not only in the Party but throughout the powerful positions of all our social organisations.

AUTHORS

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Ivan Hutnik writes: "I was born in Lyndhurst, Hampshire, in 1958. (My father was a Ukranian *émigré*.) After graduating from Bradford University, I worked for three years in India, including six months in a village in Modhya Pradesh. I am now working on a novel."

Martin Esslin is Professor of Drama, Stanford University, and was from 1963–77 Head of Radio Drama at the BBC. He is the author of many books on the theatre, including *Brecht: A Choice of Evils* (1959) and *Mediations: Essays on Brecht, Beckett and the Media* (Eyre, Methuen, 1981).

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Ronald Hayman's *Brecht: A Biography* was published last autumn by Weidenfeld, who in 1981 brought out *K*, his biography of Kafka.

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Penelope Lively won the first National Book Award in 1979 with her novel *Treasures of Time* (Heinemann), which has since been followed by *Judgment Day* (1980), *Next to Nature, Art* (1982) and *Perfect Happiness* (1983).

Blake Morrison is deputy literary editor of *The Observer*. He has published *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s* (Oxford University Press, 1980), and a short study of Seamus Heaney. He was co-editor of *Contemporary British Poetry* (Penguin, 1982), and his first book of poems will be published by Chatto & Windus in 1984.

Leonard Schapiro, whose death in London early in November we sadly record, was Britain's most distinguished analyst of Soviet history and politics, his major book in this field being *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (n.e. Eyre, Methuen 1970). A new work—*1917: The Russian Revolutions and the Origins of Present-Day Communism*—is to be published by Maurice Temple Smith in Spring 1984. His wide-ranging scholarship extended to the classics of 19th-century Russian literature: his study of *Turgenev: His Life and Times* was published by Oxford University Press in 1979.

Edward Hughes is an American journalist whose work (mainly on economic and political subjects) has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, and other magazines.

Peter Bauer (who was created a Life Peer in 1983) is Emeritus Professor of Economics and **Basil Yamey** is Professor of Economics, in the University of London. Lord Bauer's latest book, *Reality and Rhetoric: Studies in the Economics of Development*, is to be published shortly by Weidenfeld & Nicolson and Harvard University Press.

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Leonhard Reinisch, who interviews Manès Sperber in this number, is the director of the "*Nachtstudio*" (roughly, the Cultural Third Programme) of Bavarian Radio in Munich.

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Art like War like Love

Wyndham Lewis, Early & Late—By ALAN JENKINS

"BLAST HUMOUR", blazed page five of the first (June 1914) edition of Wyndham Lewis's magazine *Blast*; "Quack ENGLISH drug for stupidity and sleepiness. Arch enemy of REAL, conventionalising like gunshot, freezing supple REAL in ferocious chemistry of laughter." The sentiment is repeated in *Tarr*, and the sleepy exegete, revolving before him some of the pieces in the jig-saw of Lewis's career (but those pieces have the specific gravity, and the jaggedness, of bits of shrapnel), is momentarily galvanised. Aha: all the elements are here—the ENGLISH obsession, similarly the REAL, the arch-enemy (a godsend), gunshot, and, to clinch it, the *ferocious chemistry* of laughter. But the *Blast* "Manifesto" of the Great English Vortex does an about-face, and page three of the second section announces: "BLESS ENGLISH HUMOUR. It is the great barbarous weapon of the genius among races. The wild MOUNTAIN RAILWAY from IDEA to IDEA, in the ancient Fair of LIFE. BLESS SWIFT for his solemn bleak wisdom of laughter. SHAKESPEARE for his bitter northern rhetoric of humour. BLESS ALL ENGLISH EYES that grow crows-feet with their FANCY and ENERGY. BLESS this hysterical WALL built round the EGO. BLESS the separating, ungregarious BRITISH GRIN."

Putting everything he had behind two opposing or contradictory throws, sometimes in such quick succession that they seem almost simultaneous, was not something Lewis began doing in *Blast*. It dated from his earliest stories (1908 onwards), published from 1909 to 1917 in magazines such as *The Little Review*, *The English Review*, and *The Tramp: an Open Air Magazine*, and gathered together, with substantial alterations to structure and detail, in *The Wild Body* (1927). Adam Mars-Jones pointed out Lewis's attitude of "entrenched and contradictory opposition", even opposition to himself, in a review of those stories—reprinted by the Black Sparrow Press of California, and magnificently edited and annotated by Bernard Lafourcade—in 1982, Lewis's centenary year. The attitude cannot quite be put down to ambivalence on the part of Lewis, or simply a habit of changing his mind. "An explosive force" was what Lewis required the artist to be, and was himself. In his 1937 volume of autobiography *Blasting and Bombardiering*, he gives the impression that he exploded on an unsuspecting world with *Blast*; but a bomb-blast, with shrapnel as one of its by-products, doesn't seem quite right either. A bomb goes off once, creates havoc, and its shock-waves are felt some way away. A volcano is a better image: a volcano doesn't change its mind, it just goes on erupting, throwing out all kinds of different things that are recognisable as the products of an eruption. "A lonely old volcano of the Right" has been said in dismissal of Lewis for some time (and sometimes with justice), but that won't concern me here.

"What I started to do in Brittany I have been developing ever since", wrote Lewis in a second volume of autobiography, *Rude Assignment*; and Bernard Lafourcade in *The Complete Wild Body*[1] gives us both what Lewis started to do—the sketches, diary-entries, drafts of stories—and the retouched 1927 versions, together with the intermediate stages, the stories as they were first published, and some related material from *The Tyro*. In the stories themselves there is very little by way of plot; the early versions, as Lafourcade says, made up a sort of "travelogue", "selective of aspects of reality which were both haunted and haunting", whereas the later, finished pieces, far richer and more stylised, still offer little "narrative" interest but gain considerably in *eventfulness*. The greatest eventfulness, even so, is in Lewis's language.

> "Half-document, half-fiction, these 'stories' generally present a gang of active paralytics prone to mock aggressions, by means of which they project a primitive tottering shadow for the benefit of an ambiguous observer or *agent provocateur*."

The observer/narrator/*agent provocateur* is presented in the first story of the completed volume: the "Soldier of Humour", Kerr-Orr:

> "I experience no embarrassment in following the promptings of my fine physique. My sense of humour in its mature phase has arisen in this very acute consciousness of what is *me*. In playing that off against another hostile *me*, that does not like the smell of mine, probably finds my large

[1] *The Complete Wild Body*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. Edited by BERNARD LAFOURCADE. Black Sparrow Press (P.O. Box 3993, Santa Barbara, California 93105), $20, paper $12.50.

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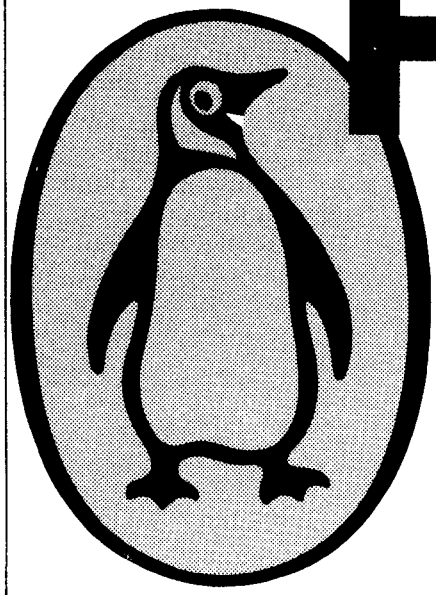

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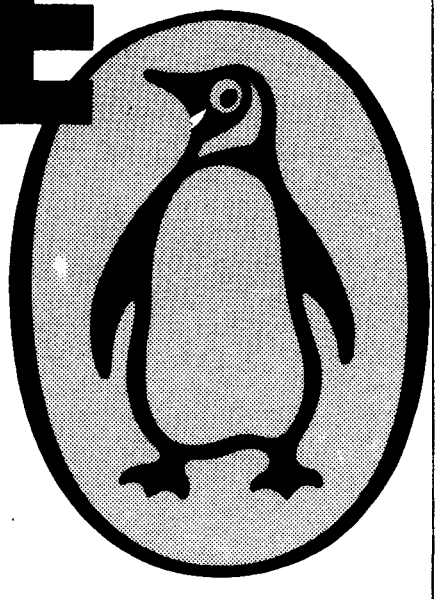

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> teeth, height and so forth abominable, I am in a sense working off my alarm at myself. So I move on a more primitive level than most men, I expose my essential *me* quite coolly, and all men shy a little. This forked, strange-scented, blond-skinned gut-bag, with its two bright rolling marbles with which it sees, bull's eyes full of mockery and madness, is my stalking-horse. I hang somewhere in its midst operating it with detachment."

So much for the observer's wild body; the others are mostly those of Breton tramps, vagabonds, innkeepers, fishermen, circus-performers. The *ambience* is that of inns, hotels, cafés—low-life interiors peopled by the likes of Brotcotnaz (who is prevented from gradually battering his wife to death by the threatened amputation of her limbs—"He could scarcely proceed to the destruction of the trunk only"); by a horde of volatile Slavs; and by Bestre, the memorable adversary who is certainly one of the prototypes for Lewis as "The Enemy", his persona of the 1920s and '30s. The mode is one of arrested picaresque; the vignettes are all charged to overflowing with meaningless, issueless vitality and violence, caught in a succession of frozen attitudes. There is little or no psychology, except a psychology of *behaviour* (rather than one of self or "interiority"); sluggish, half-formed thoughts and intentions are postulated in connection with this or that action, stratagems for the furtherance of this or that design are pursued, but on the most primitive level.

THE 1927 VOLUME INCLUDED not one but two short essays, "Inferior Religions" and "The Meaning of the Wild Body", in which Lewis attempted to explain what he thought he was up to. "Inferior Religions" in fact dates from 1917 (T.S. Eliot thought it "the most indubitable evidence of genius, the most powerful piece of imaginative thought, of anything that Mr. Lewis has written": superlatives seldom failed him when it came to Lewis), and some passages taken more or less at random from the two constatations—one almost incantatory, the other discursive-analytic—illuminate almost everything Lewis did, at the time and thereafter:

> "These studies of rather primitive people are studies in a savage worship and attraction. . . . I would present these puppets, then, as carefully selected specimens of religious fanaticism. With their attendant objects or fetishes they live and have a regular food and vitality. . . . They are only shadows of energy, not living beings. . . .Boswell's Johnson, Mr. Veneering, Malvolio, Bouvard and Pécuchet, the 'commissaire' in *Crime and Punishment,* do not live; they are congealed and frozen into logic, into an exuberant hysterical truth. . . . A comic type is a failure of a considerable energy, an imitation and standardizing of self. . . . It is the laziness that is the habit-world or system of a successful personality. . . . That Johnson was a sort of god to his biographer we readily see. But Falstaff as well is a sort of English god, like the rice-bellied gods of laughter in China. They are illusions hugged and lived in; little dead totems . . . little grotesque fetishes. . . ."
>
> "Laughter is an independent, tremendously important, and lurid emotion. Laughter is the representative of tragedy, when tragedy is away. Laughter is the emotion of tragic delight. . . ."
>
> "The Wild Body, as understood here, is that small, primitive, literally antediluvian vessel in which we set out on our adventures. . . . The Wild Body is this supreme survival that is us, the stark apparatus with its set of mysterious spasms; the most profound of which is laughter. . . ."
>
> "The root of the Comic is to be sought in the sensations resulting from the observations of a *thing* behaving like a person. But from that point of view all men are necessarily comic: for they are all *things,* or physical bodies, behaving as *persons*. . . . The movement or intelligent behaviour of matter, any autonomous movement of matter, is essentially comic. That is what we mean by comic or ludicrous. And we all, as human beings, answer to this description."

Bernard Bergonzi, writing of Lewis's life, has referred to "the tangled but potent set of influences he grew up with": absentee American father, protective English mother, early years on the East Coast of the United States, public-schooling in England, the *wanderjahre* (after 1901) as an art-student in France, Germany and Spain. In the passages above it's possible to detect (as it is in *Blast, Tarr,* and Lewis's expressionist play, *The Enemy of the Stars*) some other potent, foreign presences: Apollinaire, Picasso, Marinetti; Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Bergson. Lewis was a tireless taker-on-board of ideas and intellectual "atmospheres", and was often quick to throw them over again. With the exception of his wife, he maintained throughout his life a similar attitude to women.

AS TO IDEAS, when he looked back in *Rude Assignment* at the Wild Body period, his emphasis was somewhat misleading, as well as being contradictory in itself:

> "During those days I began to get a philosophy; but not a very good one. I am afraid like all philosophies, it was built up around the will . . . As a timely expression of personal impulses it took the form of a reaction against civilised values. It was militantly vitalist."

There is plenty of reaction against civilised values in the Wild Body grotesques (though they keep of course their own comforting rituals), but a "militant vitalism" would surely militate against the mechanical ludicrousness of these *things* behaving as *persons.*

And yet, and yet: somehow we have from the stories a strong sense of uncontrollable, unpredictable vitality in the "little dead totems" at the same time as their doings seem fixed forever as a set of emptily repetitive gestures, the actions (as Adam Mars-Jones put it) of "dynamic husks." And, worrying about all this, it's easy not to notice that we have been deflected from that "timely expression of personal impulses." Shaking off the effects of an English education came into this, but so did impulses more directly physical. Of these the Soldier of Humour has this to say: ". . . in these accounts of my adventures there is no sex interest at all: only over and over again what is perhaps the natural enemy of sex . . . ."

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Being the natural enemy of sex does not rob one's adventures of sexual interest: in Lewis's case rather the reverse. Lewis's contempt for the Freudian and the "sex-snob" notwithstanding, his own "grotesque realism" is in fact saturated with sex. Its ridiculousness, or the thing-person rendered ridiculous by it, was an enduring theme. Taking Lewis's warning (as Lafourcade does not), an attempt at Freudian "explanation" would be ill-advised; but that does not prevent us from taking note of the theme. Here as elsewhere, it would seem that Lewis's best form of defence was attack. That ridiculousness is *relished*; and relish for the object of disgust, or vice versa, is given an outing in all of Lewis's work up to and including *Self Condemned*.

Among the early work it has its most interesting expression in *Tarr* ("Sex, Hobson, is a german study, a german study", says the hero). Here and in *The Wild Body* sex enjoys a privileged relation to art, in that art is governed by an impulse as primitive, as essentially *uncivilised*, as the sexual urge: the impulse to *create*, to put something there that was not there before, to leave a trace. And art is all "outsides", according to Tarr; it has no human and sentimental "soul", its lines and masses *are* its soul. Or again: "The conditions of creation and of life disgust me—the birth of a work of art is as dirty as that of a baby. But there is no alternative to creation except the second-rate." And ". . . whatever a man does, praise him; in that way you will be acting as the artist does. . . . An artist should be impersonal like a god." So art is (for this Joycean moment at least) unethical, it is an insistent prompting, in touch with something "crude and unformed" that is necessary to an individual for him to be able to create. It is also a turning-away from "the restless inflammable ego"; for Tarr it can coexist with "Bertha-sex" but not the "swagger-sex" of his communion with Anastasya; it feeds on a certain kind of unconsciousness.

"ART" IN ALL THIS is painting, drawing, or sculpture. It makes war on ignorance and stupidity, on laziness of perception, on frivolity (although "In art as in war I was extremely lighthearted. . . . Always very serious, I have yet always been lighthearted": W.L., 1937). More than this, it is rather *like* war—at least "modernist" art is—in that similar sorts of *energy* are released by both activities; the one creative, the other destructive. All his life, Lewis was a high priest of the one, making an inferior religion of it, in fact, and with an equal intensity abominated the other. Unsurprisingly, he would seem to have relished much of his war service with a siege battery on the Western Front; but loathing is not incompatible with a vigorous rendering of loathsome circumstances. For a remarkably vivid account of those circumstances *Blasting and Bombardiering* should be consulted. Lewis loathed war partly because of what it did to art and artists (the effect of 1914-18 on him personally is incalculable; it was the end, for one thing, of a magnificent beginning). He loathed too the "post-war", the 1920s, also because of what it did to art and artists—*The Apes of God* shows what happens when the rich, fashionable and untalented get their hands on "art", on dealing and collecting and even creating, squeezing the genuine creator

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out of the market; when the "bourgeois bohemians" of *Tarr* cease to be a contemptible and amusing irritant, and start to be dangerous. Lewis's feeling about war has to do not with "opposition" or any kind of attitude: it really is loathing, though that does not preclude a kind of fascination with the spectacular aspect.

Sex and war dovetail into each other in the figure of Cantleman, serviceman on leave, in the story "Cantleman's Spring Mate":

> "The hypocrisy of Nature and the hypocrisy of War were the same. The only safety in life was for the man with the soft job. But that fellow was not conforming to life's conditions. . . . He, Cantleman, did not want to owe anything to life, or enter into league or understanding with her. . . . That night he spat out, in gushes of thick delicious rage, all the lust that had gathered in his body. The nightingale sang ceaselessly in the small wood at the top of the field where they lay. He grinned up towards it as he noticed, and once more turned to the devouring of his mate. He bore down on her as though he wished to mix her body into the soil, and pour his seed into a more methodless matter, the brown phalanges of floury land. As their two bodies shook and melted together, he felt that he was raiding the bowels of Nature: he was proud that he could remain deliberately aloof, and gaze bravely, like a minute insect, up at the immense and melancholy night. . . ."

That is not exactly the note of *The Wild Body*, but it is a new, unrepeated note in English prose: behind the suggestion of the Lawrence parody the note is like nothing heard before or since: vicious purple, say. The style Lewis developed in *The Wild Body* and *Tarr* has been described by Hugh Kenner as one of "baroque stasis", and Adam Mars-Jones has written of moments (they are many) at which "livid alignments of words upstage the sentence rather than subserve it." It seems worth adding that such alignments generate a tension between expressionistically vivid renderings of the "outside" of events, and the demands of a corrosive, articulate "laughter" (or Humour), supplied by the precisions of a powerful analytical apparatus. Backgrounds tend to come through in bolder relief than foregrounds.

It might also be said that such effects are often extremely funny, though I'm not certain that "satire" is the appropriate word. Lewis has a way of making you wince for his victims and feel sorry for them. *Tarr* has two of the greatest scenes of farce in fiction—the Bonnington Club ball and the bungled duel—and puts the Liepmann set where it wants them; but Bertha Lunken is not always merely ridiculous by any means. It is impossible, too (Lewis meant it to be), to settle into a shared "point of view" with Tarr, who often seems to have all the analytical odds on his side but is apt to move unexpectedly into a more garish light, by which he seems a compromised, complacent and self-deluded egomaniac. (The same can be said of Lewis at almost any point.)

A similar ambiguity is made the active principle of the late (1954, though begun much earlier) novel *Self Condemned*, reissued last year, again in an elegant edition by the Black Sparrow Press.[2] René Harding, Lewis's renegade history man, is seen in his self-exile—and, at length, in the preparations for it—both as noble idealist or "perfectionist" and as pompous fool; he destroys himself, or is reduced by a combination of events and high-minded wilfulness to a "glacial shell." Abandoning his professorship and comfortable life out of a conviction of its intellectual "dishonesty" (he is unable to teach as he wishes to, his analyses of historical truth and warnings of coming disaster go unheeded—though he is a great obscurer of his own motives, rather an attention-seeker, in fact), this often amiable, gentle and sympathetic mother's boy immures himself and his wife in appalling Momaco, Canada. Worse, by his refusal to accommodate, in a life given over to the operations of the rational intellect, his own nature—particularly his sexual nature—and that of his wife, he reduces that life to an automatism that has nothing about it of the Wild Body's anarchic vitality. He also destroys his wife; her own body is horribly broken.

The autobiographical elements have been often remarked (Lewis and his wife were marooned, in isolation, in poverty and in Toronto, for much of the Second World War), but that is not what gives the novel, at moments, its sombre "confessional" mood. Harding is a less Lewisian figure than Tarr, and only *regards* himself as embattled (as by 1945 Lewis really was: a very personal bitterness at the decline in his own fortunes and reputation is never far from the surface), yet it is here that we see most sharply how, for Lewis, attack as the best defence had worked against him. René lives, or functions, by a systematised reasonableness, not by denying his physical appetites but by maintaining a lofty discomfiture, an impassive disgust in the face of them. His habitual misogyny (which again *does* go to the heart of Lewis), his contempt or distrust for the all-too-obvious sexual allure of his wife Hester, and for their physical intimacy (which he admits with distaste to enjoying), is decisive at two crucial moments: first when he enters into a battle of wills with Essie, and then, after this has driven her to despair and suicide, when half-crazed with grief he kills his affection for her by insisting on the "selfishness" of her action, on seeing her as "demented."

Big girls with big hips and big eyes come in for a lot of stick in Lewis, but the passion with which the demolition is carried out bears witness to a real fear; in *Self Condemned* the fear (though muted) is bodied forth, its effects are catastrophic. Tragedy is not so far away in Momaco as it was in Paris forty-odd years before; laughter has less work to do here, and the scenes dealing with René's collapse after Essie's death are truly harrowing. Not that the novel isn't funny. It embraces Dickensian caricature and the flatness of *rapportage*, but its dominant mode is a heightened realism, a little disorderly, yet achieving a real narrative "pace." Lewis began to give his novels plots, and worked at a number of other traditionally satisfying fictional techniques, in the 1930s; in this respect, as in its engagement with the sexual theme—admitting tenderness, "love" into the act—*The Revenge for Love* can be seen, for neatness's sake, as the mid-point between *Tarr* and *Self Condemned*.

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[2] *Self Condemned*. By Wyndham Lewis. With an Afterword by Roland Smith. Black Sparrow Press, $20.00, paper $2.50; Carcanet Press, £8.95.

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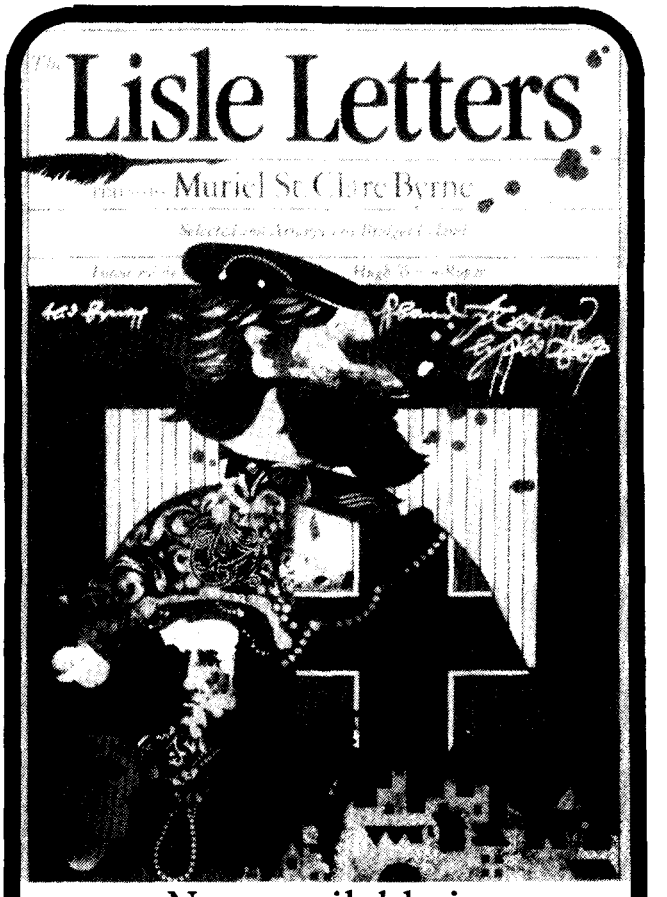
It achieves, too, a number of unforgettable evocations. One of the "difficulties" of the novel, considered from the purist point of view, is that the *sense* of horror engendered by René's and Hester's three-year siege in the Room, by their total isolation, by the sub-zero Canadian temperatures and Canadian sub-humanity, is chillingly present, but never really fleshed out. René has taken them off to a kind of hell, but it turns out to be a very lively one; staff and inmates of the Blundell hotel, thieves, prostitutes, drunks and brawlers, some of them loose but almost all of them tight, and the "marvels" of Momaco Society, are distractingly colourful. It is only the lurid glare of the hotel fire that reveals the true horror, and makes of that hotel at the same time one of Lewis's most powerful images, "a flaming spectre, a fiery iceberg."

None of the connotations of fire and ice is irrelevant; any number of hells are on offer. The personal one in which René ends gives a tremendous resonance to Lewis's most complex rendering of the sexual relation under stress; his exile from his better self is complete, he will do no more important work, and there is both revenge and self-punishment, the stabbing of both physical horror and guilt, as Harding contemplates his wife's dismembered body. Flawed intimacy, shifting loyalty, alternating terror, disgust and desire, and not a hint of swagger-sex: such are the realities of Lewis's mature vision.

In this novel, too, we hear insistently reiterated the words "absurd" or "absurdity", often endowed with a capital A; we even have *le néant* once or twice. An interest in Sartre on Lewis's part is not too fantastic to contemplate, but his use of such terms derives from an older lineage; and the Christian name, as well as the divided nature of his protagonist, recalls another French philosopher. A dictionary definition of a *vorticist* gives "Person regarding the universe, with Descartes, as a plenum in which motion propagates itself in circles." And contemplation of that name circles back to "The Meaning of the Wild Body", which exhorted us to "assume the dichotomy of mind and body . . . the laughing observer, and . . . the Wild Body." This fragment of consistency gives us a momentary purchase, at least, on the furiously abstract and harshly physical poles of Lewis's writing.

PART OF LEWIS, OF COURSE, belongs to the history of Vorticism; other parts to a hundred other histories, some of which I have touched on here, in suggesting one or two of the fields of force that animate his strange, perpetually original creations. Like a number of "neglected" writers, Lewis has not been as neglected as all that, even though the principal history to which he belongs is that of painting and design, and historians of it have thought well of him. Eliot was spot-on, and early on, detecting in his writing "the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man"; some fairly impassioned attention has come since then from Geoffrey Grigson, C. H. Sisson, Julian Symons, Hugh Kenner, and Marshall McLuhan; Jeffrey Meyers' biography was published in 1980, and a "small but significant" number of academics dotted around England, Europe and the United States are keeping their end up. There is even a Wyndham Lewis Society, with its *Enemy News*.

It is only to be hoped that the beautifully produced and printed Black Sparrow editions, liberally illustrated by Lewis's



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drawings and designs, will now attract some *readers*, for Lewis has certainly not been read widely for quite some time, and probably the last novelist to acknowledge an influence was Anthony Powell. Black Sparrow brought out in 1981 facsimiles of the two numbers of *Blast* (original size) and *The Apes of God*[3]; they have reprinted Lewis's travel-book *Filibusters in Barbary* (1932), along with material from a projected but never published second Moroccan book, *Kasbahs and Souks*, in one elegant volume—*Journey into Barbary*—edited with an introduction of exemplary clarity and helpfulness by C. J. Fox;[4] *Snooty Baronet* is forthcoming from the same press. There are new editions of both the revised (1928) *Tarr*[5] and *The Revenge for Love*[6] (with an introduction by Julian Symons, who claims it as "one of the half-dozen outstanding political novels of the twentieth century"). Newcomers to Lewis like myself should probably start with these last two with *The Wild Body* or with the wild and wonderful brew of Vorticist excitements, dramatised vignettes, military caricatures, and powerful socio-cultural analyses—all of it very funny and straightforward, in a tricksy way—in *Blasting and Bombardiering*, now that the 1967 revised edition, including the war stories, "Cantleman's Spring Mate" and "The War Baby", has been reprinted by John Calder in paperback.[7]

In the last-mentioned Lewis describes himself. An "artist" of course, but: "I am a novelist, painter, sculptor, philosopher, draughtsman, critic, politician, journalist, essayist, pamphleteer, all rolled into one, like one of those portmanteau-men of the Italian Renaissance." It is not a modest claim, but not an untrue one. In more than one of those activities Lewis did things that got him disliked, and deservedly so. He still offends the "liberal consensus" (and probably the illiberal one). But the worst punishment for a writer, after his death, is to be unread; it is our loss to go on punishing Lewis like that. The only way a writer deserves this is to be unreadable. That word has been used of Lewis, but nothing could be more exactly the opposite of the truth.

[3] *The Apes of God*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. With an Afterword by PAUL LEWIS EDWARDS. Black Sparrow Press, $20.00, paper $12.50.

[4] *Journey into Barbary*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. Edited by C. J. Fox. Black Sparrow Press, $20.00, paper $12.50.

[5] *Tarr*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. Penguin Modern Classics, £2.95.

[6] *The Revenge for Love*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. Secker & Warburg/Arts Council of Great Britain, £7.50; Penguin Modern Classics, £3.95.

[7] *Blasting and Bombardiering*. By WYNDHAM LEWIS. John Calder, £4.95.

Bloomsbury Women

Vita & Vanessa—By PENELOPE LIVELY

HENRY JAMES PRONOUNCED majestically on the reticence proper to the biographer: "In our opinion the life and the works are two very different matters, and an intimate knowledge of the one is not at all necessary for the genial enjoyment of the other." His own biographer, Leon Edel, in graceful amendment of this ascetic view, has produced one of the most exhaustive, sympathetic and illuminating examples of what he calls the narrative-pictorial or novelistic biography. Or rather, of the extension of this form, fathered by Lytton Strachey but proliferating now into, on the one hand this erudite and exhaustive school—Walter Jackson Bate on Samuel Johnson, Ellmann on Joyce, Holroyd on Strachey—and on the other the considered, frank and lively treatment of lesser figures which owes much to this whole 20th-century revolution in biographical approach but wisely adopts a less hefty approach to less significant subjects.

Neither Vita Sackville-West nor Vanessa Bell could be seen now as of seminal literary or artistic importance. Victoria Glendinning[1] is candid about Vita's novels but argues more vigorously for *The Land*; Frances Spalding[2] is more determined about Vanessa Bell's status, and indeed has perhaps a sounder case to present. In both instances, it is the life that seizes the attention rather than the work, and here the reader is in an interesting quandary, nicely stated by Vanessa Bell herself: "I'm glad I shall never be celebrated enough to have my life written. It wouldn't matter to oneself though. But there's something horrible to me, which I expect the true literary mind does not feel any sympathy with"—she's having a dig at her correspondent here, of course, her sister—"in any third person's reading what was meant to be only between two." She seems to have changed her mind about this, but the observation arouses sympathy all the same—and not just for the biographer's subject (the quarry, as Henry James put it, or the "pale, forewarned victim") but everyone else also: author, informants, and not least the reader.

Edel read seven thousand letters by Henry James and complains of the difficulty of extracting from them the truth about feelings and responses. The quoted models are delights of elegant effusion. Any chronicler of Bloomsbury and its time has an *embarras* of other kinds of *richesses*, and sometimes, for the reader, there are twinges of another kind of embarrassment too: "Cast aside the drab garments of respectability, my beautiful Bird of Paradise, they become you not"—thus Violet

[1] *Vita: The Life of V. Sackville-West*. By VICTORIA GLENDINNING. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. £12.50.

[2] *Vanessa Bell*. By FRANCES SPALDING. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

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Trefusis, second in Vita's substantial list of lovers and an association demonstrating, one feels, a considerable absence of fastidiousness on Vita's part. The correspondence between her and Harold Nicolson can cause occasional reader-distress too—the nursery code words, the complacency—but when a sense of prurience creeps in, then one has to stop and reflect. Here are exchanges of the greatest intimacy and privacy, and not only do they survive, but it is manifestly clear that their authors meant them to do so: that, in fact, a beady eye was cast towards posterity, at least in Harold Nicolson's case. Victoria Glendinning, who combines occasionally regretful comment on the more unattractive aspects of her subject with a kind of amused detachment, writes coolly of "the impression of theatricality and deliberateness that a sustained reading of his letters may produce." But, in the face of such self-exposure, can or should either biographer or reader feel prurience? Patently not. But, if you don't feel prurience, you must be allowed to feel a periodic squeamishness.

Vita was a mediocre writer and an inspired gardener. She was also emotionally feckless (except in the case of her husband and children) and possessed of a patrician disregard for circles unfamiliar to her that some might see as straightforward insensitivity. There's a certain irony in observing this neatly matched by Bloomsbury élitism when Virginia Woolf (after the initial mutual fascination between her and Vita had declined) writes to Ottoline Morrell of "those sleepwalking servantgirl novels" and calls her "very slow; and very, compared to us, primitive." But the servantgirl novels, in their time, far outsold Virginia's; and *The Land* was a best seller, as poetry goes.

It is one of Victoria Glendinning's skills as a biographer that she succeeds in commanding the reader's interest in someone whose personality one may find inherently distasteful (Edith Sitwell, equally). And, without ducking any of the less acceptable aspects of Vita, she succeeds also in demonstrating her complexities and persuading even those most resistant to this confidently arrogant woman that she could be not only kind but wisely understanding—at least to those closest to her. A letter to her son Ben, responding to his sexual anxieties, displays just such qualities and, appropriately, cites the relationship between Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant (one of love and permanence despite Duncan's homosexuality), prefacing this with "two of the happiest people I know, whose names I must conceal for reasons of discretion, are both homosexual."

The devoted followers of those practical and influential *Observer* gardening articles (which produced a nation-wide rash of species roses, silver and white beds, apple trees shrouded in climbing roses: "good taste" gardening) would have been startled to learn the details of their author's home life. It would, incidentally, have been satisfying to have had more in the biography about Vita's gardening, given that it is for that she is known to most; there is a workmanlike attention to it, but a whole chapter would not have come amiss. But the violent emotional life has been allowed to dominate, as indeed it had to.

It is here that there is an apt parallel between these two lives —maternal, charismatic Vanessa and wayward, headstrong Vita. Both are chronicles of sexual ambivalence—or rather, of the way in which companionate love can transcend sexual inclination. Both women lived with men who were basically homosexual and with whom they ceased to sleep after the birth of a child or children; both relationships were long and mainly happy. The Nicolsons' was subjected by themselves to intense and somewhat self-congratulatory scrutiny; Vita, in rather confused analysis, put the success of the arrangement down to the fact that she had affairs with women and Harold with men, and went on to say comfortably that this would be dangerous for "ordinary people" and, with rather more sense, that in any case laws cannot be made about emotional relationships. She and Harold gave radio talks on the subject of marriage, though again one feels that the audience would have been taken aback by a candid account of things. But the audience, of course, was conventional and middle-class ("bedints", in the appalling Sackville family jargon—India, when visited by Vita, was a "beastly squalid bedint country") and, while useful as readers and book-buyers, beyond the pale in terms of taste and sensitivity. It has to be said, in mitigation, that Vita was far outclassed in snobbery and arrogance by her mother, a character before whose excesses of vulgarity and thoughtlessness one feels a kind of awed amazement. Lady Sackville, on one occasion, sacked a nanny because she suspected her of having eaten three dozen (*sic*) quails intended for a dinner party. Meeting Harold's parents for the first time (she thought them "very ugly and very small and unsmart looking"), she recorded "I said nothing to her." She was virtually uneducated, could neither spell nor speak English properly, and was given to exclaiming "*Quel roman est ma vie*!" Indeed yes.

All this, of course, makes for wonderfully good reading. If there weren't people like this, you feel at moments, they should

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indeed be invented. The material available to Vita's biographer—aside from the torrent of documentation—is the stuff of fiction (and sometimes of Mills & Boon fiction): Knole, the Sackvilles, English peers and Spanish gypsies, wealth and infidelity and law-suits, travel and fame. And Victoria Glendinning has made excellent use of it. If, in the four hundred odd pages of the book, you feel by the end that amid so much *sturm und drang* it is hard to see how there was time for that long list of publications, let alone the construction (literally) of that superb garden, then I suppose that is a perennial biographical problem. The areas of silence in a life may well be the areas of significance, and the biographer's greatest challenge. The relation between Vita's works and her life requires no very profound critical analysis, and Victoria Glendinning deals honestly and perceptively with it. I did feel Harold Nicolson's diplomatic career, so selfishly disregarded by Vita, deserved more space—though, as the author says, he has had his due elsewhere. Selection and synthesis is the biographical headache; it must, in this case, have amounted to a migraine.

IF THE "NOVELISTIC" TREATMENT of biography, or an academically tempered version of that, is now the favoured form, then the connection between author and subject becomes even more intriguing. Why does one person choose to write the life of another? Empathy? Availability? Hostility? It is a curious activity, after all, requiring an examination of someone else's practices, motivations, faults, virtues and concealments with an attention and a relentlessness that we do not usually give to the conduct of friends or relatives. There must be emotional involvement combined with a proper detachment. The narrative of the life must be informed by the wisdoms of foresight; the biographer is in possession of information that the subject does not have—he knows what came next. When Frances Spalding quotes that youthful remark of Vanessa Bell's about "I am glad I shall never be celebrated enough to have my life written", she attaches to it the irony of subsequent events: it is both what Vanessa said then and the same words with the accretions of the next eighty years. This, of course, is the fascination of the biographical process, and the area in which artistry is involved. The biographer also is creating a life, but out of fact rather than fiction: the selection and interpretation of those facts is his creative field. He is required to penetrate the lies and silences of someone else's existence.

Bloomsbury was given neither to silence nor, on the whole, to lying. Indeed, there are times when the blast of information seems overwhelming. Frances Spalding too must have had problems of extraction, and if her tone is more pedestrian than Victoria Glendinning's drier style of observation, she gives a thorough and convincing picture of the lynchpin of Bloomsbury, that calm and magnetic woman whom Virginia Woolf admired more than anyone and who pursued her own apparently phlegmatic way amid the emotional and sexual couplings and partings of her circle. "Apparently" only—for despite an absence of self-confession it is clear that her internal stresses were at times great: anxiety over her painting and doubts as to its direction, distress over Duncan Grant and his liaisons with young men throughout the long years of their association.

She sounds a very much nicer person than Vita. Dismissive, also, and prone to an exclusiveness that seems sometimes like social laziness or a simple deficiency of interest in other people, but also faithful and sustaining and generous to her friends. That capacity to be at the centre of things, to be the one towards whom others gravitate, is a curiously difficult one to pin down; you know it when you see it, but how it is done defies description. Roger Fry, for a while Vanessa's lover and then her life-long friend, tried: ". . . just being yourself all the time and not making any huge effort, just living very intensely and naturally. . . ." But, beyond such elusive qualities, she clearly was endowed with great organisational efficiency, manifested not only in domestic arrangements but professionally, in connection with the several artistic groups with which she was involved. She seems to have had the kind of undemonstrative energy that gets on with whatever is required, whether it is organising an exhibition or managing a household of husband, lovers, servants and children, and keeping everyone surprisingly happy and harmonious.

Her father's death, followed by that of her half-sister Stella, began it all. Someone had to take charge of the family, cope with housing and servants, make decisions, go in a particular direction. Frances Spalding's description of this point in Vanessa's girlhood, when her half-brother George Duckworth was trying to introduce her into the conventional society of her birth and upbringing, is fascinating for just that wisdom of foresight possessed by the biographer and, in this instance, given Bloomsbury saturation, almost inevitably by the reader. We see Vanessa nearly becoming someone quite different, nearly pursuing the expected course of marriage and respectability. And then the person that she will one day be pulls her back, jibs at the tea-parties and the formal dinners, moves her brothers and sister to unfashionable Bloomsbury, takes up with Thoby's Cambridge friends. It is to witness the sense in which lives are not strictly linear, but, viewed in their entirety, may be understood only by a complex system of cross-references, by looking forwards and backwards.

FRANCES SPALDING, HERSELF an art historian, usefully charts Vanessa's development as a painter and places her within the context of the period—moving from art-student days and respect for Sargent to the traumatic time of exposure to Impressionism, then even more importantly to Roger Fry's "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" exhibition, and thence to the deliberately provocative and innovative period of the Omega Workshops. In fact it is this sense of artistic purpose and seriousness that perhaps comes over best. To anyone familiar with Virginia Woolf's diaries and letters, in which Vanessa exists as a crucial but nevertheless slightly evasive figure, it is something of a revelation to see her head-on, both more substantial and more professionally committed.

But this, of course, is the biographer's ultimate omniscience: the ability to take the whole kaleidoscopic vision of a person—the fragmented and conflicting views of many—and construct from it a single picture. The picture of Vanessa Bell—as wife, sister, mother, friend—is an interestingly coherent one: she

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does seem to have had the kind of personal integrity that enables someone to be herself at all times, rather than all things to all men. The feeling that people relied on her comes from every side; the testimony of the hold she had over them lies in the durability of her relationships, keeping husband and ex-lovers within her orbit for the rest of her life. Though it is clearly a distortion to pretend that her unusual emotional arrangements—or Vita's—made for untarnished contentment: Roger Fry was deeply distressed by her shift to Duncan Grant, Vanessa was repeatedly wounded by Duncan. And as for Vita, her love affairs—described schoolgirlishly by herself as "scrapes"—may have been essential to her view of life as an adventure, but the view from the other side was not always so blithe. She hurt people, even if she always kept them on as emotional retainers. Again, the biographer's view is the more comprehensive.

Or is it? Nowhere is that devious word "truth" more bandied around than in discussion of biography. But included in the "truth" about a life is the interpretation of that life by the person who lives it: Vita's picture of herself as fed by romance and adventure; Vanessa's less aggressively stated but equally apparent commitment to art and to freedom of spirit. The interest then lies in observing how far these views from within accord with what is seen and experienced by others, by the friends, children, lovers exposed to a person's concept of themselves. And frequently discord is what we see. Vanessa's and Duncan's respect for freedom from the shackles of sexual and social constraint stopped short of enthusiasm at their daughter Angelica's eventual marriage to Bunny Garnett, twenty-five years older than her and Duncan's former lover. Roy Campbell, whose wife Mary Vita seduced, did not see her spirit of adventure in quite the same light as she did. The armchair reader, spectator of the hurly-burly and vacillating between participation and the twinges of prurience, may well feel that there's nowt so queer as folk—an expression I don't imagine either Vanessa or Vita ever heard.

Practical Criticism

On Philip Larkin's Prose—By BLAKE MORRISON

LARKIN IS OUR MOST fallible poetic voice, and least fallible poet. He has had the confidence to seem unconfident, to create a persona more than ordinarily baffled by life's ordinary mysteries—"men [and] the life of men, time and the passing of time, love and the fading of love." His is a way of knowing prepared to admit "I don't know" ("Mr Bleaney"), or "Someone would know, I don't" ("Church Going"), or

Strange to know nothing, never to be sure
Of what is true or right or real,
But forced to qualify **or so I feel,**
Or, **Well, it does seem so:**
Someone must know.

Larkin's poems show the mind in action, pressing towards conclusions, checking back, going off on false tracks, correcting itself, analysing its own analyses ("Too subtle that. Too decent too . . ."), warning us not to expect too much: "Well, we shall find out"—but only at the end, or perhaps only at the End. Yet we come to Larkin for knowledge, as we don't to his contemporaries, because the tentative truths he has to offer seem hard-won and the voice that offers them a trustworthy one. What most poets know isn't worth knowing; what he doesn't, is.

Another way of putting this would be to say that Larkin is a modest poet, and not just in output. It is not that he thinks his poetry a modest achievement—the interviews in *Required Writing*[1] suggest that he is quietly confident of its power—but that he has constructed a voice which comes clean about its failings and limitations. That is why it has always been tempting to say, as Larkin in an essay notes people saying of Hardy, that here is a poet so straightforward that he doesn't need critics ("his work contains little in thought or reference that need elucidation, his language is unambiguous, his themes easily comprehensible"). Only recently have we begun to recognise just how many skills and devices have gone into the making of that "natural" Larkin voice. The extent to which he has been influenced by Symbolist poets, a point insisted on by Barbara Everett and Andrew Motion, is the current challenge to received views of Larkin. And though that particular idea seems in danger of being over-emphasised—a Symbolist influence may be present in some of the shorter lyrics, but hardly goes far to account for the achievement of the major long poems like "Dockery and Son", "The Whitsun Weddings", "Church Going", "The Building", and "The Old Fools"—it is welcome confirmation that the old caricatures of Larkin as "man next door" or "Ron Glum" or bicycle-clipped bachelor are now being re-examined.

Will *Required Writing* also change the picture? Does reading Larkin as critic help us to read Larkin as poet? On the face of it, no, for Larkin is at pains to emphasise that poet and critic are quite different creatures: this is "required writing" (criticism and reminiscence), forced on him by the demands of editors,

[1] *Required Writing: Miscellaneous Pieces 1955–1982.* By PHILIP LARKIN. Faber, £4.95.

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"rarely accepted . . . without a sinking of the heart, nor finished without an inordinate sense of relief"; it is not to be confused with unrequired writing (poetry), a free and self-gratifying activity ("To write a poem is a pleasure: sometimes I let it compete in the open market, so to speak, with other spare-time activities"). Larkin finds it "an unexpected consequence of becoming known as a writer that you are assumed to be competent to assess other writers"; his only reason for reprinting these miscellaneous pieces is that they have "begun to be quoted out of context"—their exhumation "would otherwise hardly be justified."

Yet even as Larkin thus prefaces his criticism, we notice characteristic strategies coming into play: he runs himself down in order to build up our confidence in him. The same tone of surprise that anyone should be remotely interested in anything he might have to say also pervades two reprinted addresses here. Asked to open a revamped version of the library where he held his first job, he wonders what he has done "to justify my presence at the ceremony." Likewise, when asked to make the opening speech at a seminar on modern literary manuscripts: "in contrast with the rest of the speakers, I really know very little about modern literary manuscripts." There may be an after-dinner tact and good manners about such remarks, but with Larkin they also go deeper: as in his poetry, telling us he doesn't know is the necessary prelude to showing us that he does.

WHAT KIND OF CRITIC IS HE? First and foremost he is a promoter: just as his poetry of the 1950s derived much of its strength from a conviction that certain tones of voice in English poetry were being neglected, so his criticism fights against the current to draw attention to overlooked or underrated figures: Hardy, Betjeman, Stevie Smith, Barbara Pym, Ian Fleming, Gladys Mitchell, a small cluster of writers who share a strong feeling for England and the English. He writes of them with "vivacious affection" (his own phrase for Betjeman's manner), conceiving it his duty to communicate the pleasure of reading them and to get them the readers they deserve—"cash-customers", not "the dutiful mob that signs on each September."

He is no theorist: though at least three of his critical pronouncements are famous enough to merit a place in any future edition of *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*—"Poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are"; "Foreign poetry? No!"; "I have no belief in 'tradition' or a common myth kitty . . . "—they aren't statements intended to lay down rules or alter the canon. We will find nothing in Larkin about breaking the pentameter or dissociated sensibility.

Nor is there much evidence of cosmopolitanism: it isn't just that English literature dominates to the exclusion of other literatures, but that literature dominates to the exclusion of other arts: jazz is there, but not art, sculpture or classical music; and the solitary mention of drama is to record an interval departure from a production of *The Playboy of the Western World* ("'Am I enjoying myself?' 'No, I've never watched such stupid balls.' "). There are poets whose criticism we read for its own sake, as aesthetics, and others we read only for what their criticism tells us about themselves. Eliot and Pound are of the first category, Larkin is of the second. His essay on Marvell, for example, is not a seminal, canon-changing piece like Eliot's; its interest is its emphasis on Marvell in his role as MP for Kingston-upon-Hull; it takes not the wider (world) view but the narrower (Humberside) one, Hull's first famous poet/public servant as seen by the second one.

If Larkin strives to be a practical rather than a theoretical critic, this is in part because he associates theory with the advocacy of Modernism, and with those critics who have "bullied" the reader into "giving up the consumer's power to say 'I don't like this, bring me something different.' " His dislike of the "mystification and outrage" of the Modernist artist is famously attested to in the introduction to *All What Jazz*:

> "Piqued at being neglected, he has painted portraits with both eyes on the same side of the nose, or smothered a model with paint and rolled her over a blank canvas. He has designed a dwelling-house to be built underground. He has written poems resembling the kind of pictures typists make with their machines during the coffee break, or a novel in gibberish, or a play in which characters sit in dustbins. He has made a six-hour film of someone asleep. He has carved human figures with large holes in them."

Affection for Larkin's criticism generally shouldn't lead one to go soft on him at points like this. It isn't just that the claims are absurd (did Picasso paint as he did because "piqued at being neglected"?) and that there's a depressing inability to discriminate between good Modernist art and bad (Henry Moore is lumped in with action painting, Beckett with concrete poetry), but that Larkin is contradicting his own "pleasure principle." For what he has been unable to see is that millions of people do actually *enjoy* modern painting, modern literature, and modern jazz: they haven't been *conned* or *cajoled*; they haven't even had to *work hard at appreciation*. There are, quite simply, large areas of Modernism in which anyone can take an unaffected pleasure.

IT IS TEMPTING TO SAY that Larkin's criticism has suffered from a failure to recognise this; but that wouldn't quite be true. For one thing, he is certainly not as unlike the Modernists as he would want to think. He agrees with Pound, for example, on the desirability of "making it new", though he means something slightly different by it—not "innovation" (departure from existing practice) but "novelty" (utter originality) and even "novel-ty" (the poem having the virtues of novelistic prose). If there is one idea that *Required Writing* advances more fervently than even that of pleasure, it is that "every poem must be its own sole freshly created universe." The proper impetus for poetry, Larkin claims, is the poet's conviction that what he has to say has not been said before, at any rate not in the way he wants to say it: "Of the contemporary scene I can only say that there are not enough poems written to my ideas, but then if there were I should have less incentive to write myself"; "one reason for writing, of course, is that no one's written what you want to read"; "one of the

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reasons one writes is that all existing books are somehow unsatisfactory."

The most arresting moment in *Required Writing* comes with the idea of the "blank book", an image borrowed from Orwell's *1984* but given Larkin's special weight:

> "the books the past has given us, the books in which the bookseller deals, are printed, they are magnificent, but they are finite. Only the blank book, the manuscript book, may be the book we shall give the future. Its potentialities are endless."

This might not look out of place in a Futurist manifesto. And though Larkin remains stubbornly anti-Modernist in his rejection of the idea that books are made from earlier books—he believes that poems should be made of "personal non-literary experience"—there is enough here to suggest that his attitude to Modernism may be more complex than the introduction to *All What Jazz* would suggest.

His foreword's phrase for that introduction is "light-heartedly aggressive", and reading it again here, in the context of other pieces, it's the light-heartedness rather than the aggression one notices. Larkin may say he thinks "foreign languages irrelevant" and foreign literature pointless, but why then his evidently good grasp of French and his enthusiasm for Montherlant's *Les Jeunes Filles*? He may complain of Academe, with its monastic disciplines and sharp practices, but why his literary historian's interest in the ebb-and-flow of poetic reputations, his passionate appeal for the purchase and retention in this country of contemporary authors' literary manuscripts ("one win will compensate for ninety-nine misses", he claims) and his evident acquaintance with the work of academic critics (he is able, for example, to rehearse the principal critical disputes over Marvell: "Leavis with Bateson, Douglas Bush with Cleanth Brooks, Pierre Legouis with William Empson, Frank Kermode with Milton Klonsky")?

He may dismiss the fashion for poetry readings, twice citing Dylan Thomas on the futility of "travelling 200 miles just to recite, in my fruity voice, poems that would not be appreciated and could anyway be read in books", so why his thoughtful piece "Masters' Voices", which concludes that our own age will be "richer" for having made possible the recording of poets' voices ("there comes a moment with any poem that we have really taken to ourselves when we want to hear its author read it")? He may be scornful of those poets who set themselves up as sages and prophets, but why then does he quote D. H. Lawrence so approvingly, or write so warmly of that neo-Apocalyptic Yeatsian, Vernon Watkins? One can't regret Larkin's xenophobia and philistinism, because it provides him with some of his best jokes—"Who's Jorge Luis Borges?", for example, or "I wouldn't mind going to China if I could come back the same day." But equally one can't believe it: the tone is playful, overdone, self-parodying.

THERE IS A FURTHER DISTINCTION here, between what both he and we secretly recognise about him, and what he hasn't recognised but we think we have. His misanthropy and child-hating come in the first category: he relishes the wit

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they make possible—"Other people are hell (I have never seen why Sartre should have been praised for inverting and falsifying this truism)"; "It was that verse about becoming again as a little child that caused the first sharp waning of my Christian sympathies"—but wouldn't mind us concluding that he is probably less anti-social than he makes out.

Into the second, more sensitive category comes a matter such as work. Larkin is adamant about the desirability of a steady full-time job, not least for writers. But it's hard to miss the half-envy with which he writes of those who have pursued a Bohemian or hand-to-mouth existence—Edward Thomas, Francis Thompson, W. H. Davies, the Beats. To explore this contradiction candidly is difficult for Larkin: it might mean admitting, for example, that the choice he has made in life—to pursue a professional career and write in his spare time—has deprived him of the chance to produce, if not better poems, then at least more of them. Only once, in the *Paris Review* interview, does he drop his guard:

> "Sometimes I think, Everything I've written has been done after a day's work, in the evening: what would it have been like if I'd written it in the morning, after a night's sleep? Was I wrong?"

And, he reflects, immediately after this, how "odd" it is that "what society has been willing to *pay* me for is being a librarian", not a writer.

Elsewhere, though, the gloves are up in an aggressive posture: subsidy for poets is a wrong; campus poets can come to no good; everyone envies everyone else; choice", anyway, is misleading—"The whole consolation in the business, as in just about every other, is that in all probability there was really no choice." Determinism consoles because it tells us we can't choose wrongly; but the reader of *Required Writing* may well feel that Larkin remains unconsoled that he has not written more ("I love Hardy because he wrote so much"), and wonders if his job is not to blame.

This might seem to be making heavy weather of a theme which Larkin himself, in poems like "Toads", "Toads Revisited" and "Poetry of Departures", is able to make light of. But a light treatment does not, for him, denote frivolity. In pieces here on Betjeman, Stevie Smith, and Ogden Nash, he is at pains to point to the serious elements in their work, since "preoccupation with the short, escapable, unimportant periods when life is funny to the exclusion of the long, inescapable, important periods when it is serious implies, ultimately (and sometimes immediately), mediocre taste . . .". He praises Ogden Nash as "a sort of honorary serious writer", and with Stevie Smith demonstrates that "this is not the note of a comic writer" but of a poet who speaks with the authority of sadness."

Sadness is the great touchstone for Larkin: "it surely cannot be denied that the dominant emotion in Hardy is sadness . . . the sometimes gentle, sometimes ironic, sometimes bitter but always passive apprehension of suffering." Like Owen, who wrote (Larkin says) not about the "particular suffering" of war but "all suffering", he believes that the poetry is in the pity. Sadness has all the best cadences; Yeats's conviction that passive suffering is not a theme for poetry is called "fatuous." The burden of such passages, of course, is to suggest that sadness and passive suffering are Larkin's themes too, and to remind us that his light verse—"Self's the Man", "Vers de Société", "This be the Verse"—is not as light as all that.

Here Larkin drops some general hints about his work; at other points it is a matter more of specific echoes, illuminating parallels, suggestive glosses. Taking over from the librarian caretaker who was his predecessor at Wellington, Larkin reflects much as his speaker does in "Mr Bleaney": "I wondered uneasily if my life would be anything like his." An image he uses about childhood in his 1959 review of the Opies' *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*—"its peculiar, heartless, savage strength"—reminds one of the thought in the later "Sad Steps" about "the strength and pain/Of being young." The voice of Jake Balokowsky can be heard not only in "Posterity" but in a piece on Betjeman that puts itself into the mind of the American reader: "What are you ranking it with? Eliot? Auden? Honestly I don't think it makes that grade. It's more like what you were saying, you know, Twenties stuff, Bright Young Things and so on." And, quoting from a novel he read in his Coventry schooldays, Julian Hall's *The Senior Commoner,* Larkin quotes the following passage:

> "'You old humbug, Cyril, you're junior to me.' Stephens winked at Wrenbrook and pressed down the tobacco in his pipe.
>
> 'Junior to you, am I? But you've got a boy or a grandson or something at the place now. I haven't. I haven't got anybody. I say, I want a proper light,' he added, looking up as a waiter came over to his table."

Larkin says that he failed in his attempt to use the technique of this passage in his novels, "though traces of it may still remain." They do, of course—in "Dockery and Son", which opens "'Dockery was junior to you,/Wasn't he?' said the Dean. 'His son's here now' ", and whose narrator goes on to reflect how he has "no son, no wife,/No house or land." For those who wish to use it in that way, *Required Writing* is as illuminating a sourcebook as was his Oxford anthology. And for those who wish simply to know more about Larkin's life, there are the pieces on his Oxford student days, his first two library jobs, and his friendship with Vernon Watkins.

NEITHER SET OF READERS, however, will get as full a picture as they might have had. Larkin is guilty of a double omission: not only does he omit several reprint-worthy pieces, but he omits to tell us this in his foreword, which in speaking of "the pieces collected here" leaves it open to the careless reader to infer that this is the Collected Prose. There is nothing sinister in what he has chosen to leave out—with one exception, he has been judicious in selecting the best—but there are several pieces one would have liked to see: the 1964 interview with Ian Hamilton, which doesn't overlap with the two interviews here; a comment on the poem "Absences" (written for the anthology *Poets' Choice*) which notes the Symbolist nature of the last line; the sleeve notes to the LP recordings of *The Less Deceived* and *The Whitsun Weddings*; contributions to two *London Magazine* symposia, one on "The Writer in His Age" ("surely a writer's only 'necessary

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engagement' is with his subject matter, which is not primarily a conscious choice at all"), and the other from 1962 which includes several of his most revealing remarks ("experience makes literature look insignificant beside life, as indeed life does beside death"; "A style is much more likely to be formed from partial slipshod sampling than from the coherent acquisition of a literary education"; "the poet is perpetually in that common human condition of trying to feel a thing because he believes it, or believe a thing because he feels it"); an appreciative review of an anthology of Georgian verse; a short tribute to Louis MacNeice; and several pieces from the last two years or so—among them a *TLS* piece on Tennyson, a marvellous *Spectator* piece on Cyril Connolly, *Observer* pieces on the Powys Brothers and *The Oxford Book of Death*—which in most cases appeared too late for inclusion.

The diligent can chase up most items of Larkinia with the help of Barry Bloomfield's bibliography, which lists, for example, some intriguing-looking *Guardian* reviews from the 1950s and early '60s—on Amis's *A Case of Samples*, Kenner's *Dublin's Joyce*, Kermode's *Romantic Image*, Kathleen Raine's *Collected Poems*, and a single piece of 1959 taking in Graves's *Collected*, Lowell's *Life Studies*, and Berryman's *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*. Though Larkin may be forgiven for thinking these reviews of greater interest to the scholar than the general reader, there is one omission he surely can't be forgiven: the article "Not The Place's Fault" (*Umbrella*, Summer 1959), a marvellous recreation of his schooldays, which can have been left out only because of some candid but far from disrespectful remarks on home and family.

Required Writing is not a declamatory or confessional book, but in its own way it reveals a great deal. There is always something to pick up, from his description of getting the last lines to his poems when they are two-thirds done and then "closing the gap", to the Freudian slip that has him speaking of his first job "in the middle of the First—Christ, I mean the *Second* World War." One question, however, the book can't (and can't be expected to) answer: why did he stop writing poetry? It is a cruel question, both for us and for him, but we had better be clear that this is the case: there have been only a handful of poems since *High Windows*, ten years ago, and when Larkin himself raises the matter in his *Paris Review* interview he tells us firmly that "Anything I say about writing is bound to be retrospective."

It won't quite do to answer that he has been too rigorous to grant himself the privilege of Grand Old Men to lapse into "repetition, platitude or frivolity": that is true, of course, but there is still the question of why the mysterious private impulse died out, or seems to have. Did his full-time career gradually use up the creative energy that was once left over? Did the subversive pleasure in writing dry up as he became accepted as our leading poet? Did he become too aware of how his poems work, despite his superstitious vow never to examine their processes? Or did he simply run out of things to say? We don't know, and there is no guarantee that we shall find out. We can only hope that the past tense is temporary, and that when posterity comes to pose the question it will also have to pose a second one: "Why did he resume writing poetry with such abundance in his long old age?"

Turgenev, Weak & Strong

A Writer in his Letters—By LEONARD SCHAPIRO

ALTHOUGH NO ONE COULD CALL Turgenev secretive or reticent, since he was an enthusiastic conversationalist and a prolific correspondent, there are many aspects of his life that remain a mystery.

"My life is my works" was his frequent reply to requests for biographical detail. But this was only true in the limited sense that nearly all of his work reflects in some way his own experience. Occasionally, as in *First Love*, we get virtually pure autobiography. More usually a personal revelation lies concealed in a series of quite fictional episodes. Thus, in *Spring Torrents* we should look in vain for any significant parallels with Turgenev's life, beyond reminiscences of youthful travels in Germany or of a grudge against the theatre at Wiesbaden. But buried in the story of a weak man whose prospects of domestic bliss are blighted by a wild infatuation for a woman of dominant character it is not too fanciful to discern a hint of the author's regret for his failure to make a family life for himself because of his willing subjection to a much stronger personality than his own, the singer Pauline Viardot, who was solidly married.

The letters[1] probably offer a better guide to the secret of the man. There is no evidence that he ever intended them for publication, except where he says so in terms (as in the case of his moving comment on the death of George Sand for whom as a person, rather than as an author, he had unbounded admiration and affection). But the correspondence occasionally gives us a glimpse of that inner personality which still in many respects remains an enigma. Thus, on 10 December 1871, he wrote to the art and music critic V. V. Stasov, with whom he was in no sense on terms of intimacy:

> "You know those unofficial marriages—they sometimes turn out more poisonous than the more accepted form. I know a lot about the problem and have thought deeply

[1] *Turgenev's Letters*. Selected, translated and edited by A. V. KNOWLES. The Athlone Press, £16.00.

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about it. If I have failed to deal with it up till now in my literary writings, it is simply because I have always avoided subjects which are too personal. I find them embarrassing."

Of course, as one would expect, the letters concerned with his two, somewhat senile, quasi-love affairs are revealing of his feelings at the time. The two ladies concerned were Baroness Vrevskaia, the widow of a general, who died of typhus while nursing in Bulgaria; and Maria Savina, the actress. Turgenev was physically attracted to these young women at different times in the 1870s, and conducted a flirtation with each of them which, in the case of Vrevskaia at any rate, was wholly one-sided. Charming and whimsical as these letters are (Dr Knowles has included a selection of them), they are undoubtedly lacking in virility. The full correspondence, in both cases, reveals that Turgenev lacked the will to make the first move, but (like Sanin in *Spring Torrents*) left events to develop on the woman's initiative. This attitude characterised his essentially platonic relationship with Pauline Viardot, as April FitzLyon shows in her admirable biography, *The Price of Genius*. In general, the sexual passion played a subordinate part in Turgenev's life—though he was not impotent.

Dr Knowles has made a very skilful selection of 236 out of a total of over 6,550 letters which have been published. The bulk of them are in the many volumes of the complete letters and works well edited for the Soviet Academy of Sciences; but these must be supplemented by the publication of letters recently made available by descendants of Pauline Viardot. The newly revealed letters are presented in two volumes edited by Alexandre Zviguilsky, and in one by Zviguilsky and Henri Granjard. There are probably many more letters which have not come to light, and some are known to be in the possession of the Viardot descendants and have not been made public.

Even more intriguing is the possibility that among the material withheld from publication is a diary. A single passage from it copied into a letter to his friend Annenkov is enough to show the degree of frankness with which he committed his moods to its pages. He wrote on 17 March 1877, when he was fifty-nine:

> "Midnight. I am sitting again at my desk. Downstairs my poor friend [Pauline] is singing something, but her voice has now completely gone [she was fifty-six]. My soul is filled with a darkness, darker than the night. . . . As the fleeting moment, the day has passed, empty, aimless, colourless. You look up and it's time to roll into bed again. There is no more to do, nothing to expect, even to desire."

READ IN CONJUNCTION with the excellent notes which introduce each correspondent, and the summary of the main biographical data which precedes each of the five periods into which the book is divided, these letters give a fair picture of the essential Turgenev, or at least of the more important facts of his life. Across the century which has elapsed since his death they reveal some of that fascinating personality which captivated all—or nearly all—who came into contact with him. Among topics well covered by this anthology are Madame Viardot—who must always come first in any discussion of Turgenev—and the minor love affairs; his views on music (on *Das*

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Rheingold: "the music and the libretto are equally unbearable"); on literature, and on the art of writing; his chequered relations with Tolstoy and strained ones with his natural daughter; his formidable mother and his financial problems. There is very little malice or anger—in this respect the selection faithfully reflects the full correspondence. But there is ample evidence of dislikes—Slavophile doctrines, for example, or all-embracing systems. His distaste for the Muscovite side of Russian life extended to *Anna Karenina*:

> "However great Tolstoy's talent may be, he cannot get out of the Moscow bog into which he has crawled. Orthodoxy, the nobility, Slavophilism, gossip, the Arbat, Katkov, Antonina Bludova, bad manners, self-importance, the customs of the landowners, the officer class, hatred of everything foreign, sour cabbage soup, and a lack of soap—in a word, chaos!"

It is, of course, foolish to reproach an anthology for omitting this or that item which happens to appeal to the reviewer. Dr Knowles has picked his material with great skill, and it is remarkable how much of Turgenev's personality has been revealed. One detail is missing which the complete letters clearly show: the amount of time and trouble which Turgenev took in the effort to help others. To quote some statistics: of the 740 letters written during the last two complete years of his life, 1881 and 1882 (though there were more letters in fact, either as yet unpublished or published since the Soviet Academy edition was completed), 79 dealt with helping others—trying to promote a young author's publication, or to secure employment, or simply financial aid.

The picture which emerges from these letters is that of a warm-hearted man, with a great capacity for friendship even with those from whom he was separated by political opinions, and with unusual charm which made so many seek his friendship; yet, at the same time, one whose life was punctuated by dramatic quarrels. It shows a man of good, liberal standards, who hated violence, and refused to be beguiled by systems or doctrines which were supposed to provide short-cuts to utopia.

A weak man, it is true, in one sense. But for a Russian intellectual in the 19th century to spurn the fashionable panaceas, to reject commitment to one or other of the camps, of itself argued some strength of character. Above all, we meet a man in these letters for whom relations between human beings is the pre-eminently important fact. His love is for men and women, not for "Humanity" or "Mankind" like most of his contemporaries. He believed that what mattered above all was the way in which human beings behaved one to another, that the salvation of mankind lay in the characters of the individuals who compose it. He was not a religious man, but the most appropriate way to describe his personal faith is a commitment to love. (Being mortal, of course, that did not prevent him from committing acts of meanness and petty malice from time to time.)

REGRETTABLY THIS BOOK is weakest on one important aspect of Turgenev—his attitude to revolution and revolutionaries. At times, not always without an ulterior motive, his sympathy for the revolutionaries has been interpreted as sympathy for revolution. On revolution his views were clear and constant: no good ever comes out of violence, which of itself makes the aims, however desirable, unattainable. For revolutionaries, however, he had a good deal of sympathetic feeling. In part this was the admiration of an indecisive, uncommitted man for the bold, resolute, and absolutely dedicated to a cause. He was quite definite in his conviction that the Russian revolutionaries' aims were out of tune with the actual wishes and aspirations of the peasants in whose name they purported to act. But he was sometimes too ready to make excuses for the conspirators which the facts did not warrant.

This was particularly true on his trip to Russia in 1879 when he was so far carried away by the rapturous reception which he received from student revolutionaries that he almost went so far as to condone the violence of their actions, wrongly interpreting it as little more than the demand for constitutional changes, of which the extreme form in which it was couched was merely a reaction to the repressive measures of the government. Yet it was the friends of the same students who fêted Turgenev in 1879 who blew Alexander the Second to pieces in the afternoon of the morning during which he had signed a rescript convening a Council of Ministers to discuss an embryo form of constitution for Russia. (Incidentally, a small boy was killed in the process by a bomb thrown at the Czar.)

The translation by Dr Knowles seems to me to be excellent; and his book makes effortless and agreeable reading, and reproduces the flavour of the original. I spotted only one error: on p. 191 "It cost me nothing" is a mistranslation for "I paid off nothing by doing it", in other words, "I achieved nothing by it." The book is a timely tribute to Turgenev on the hundredth anniversary of his death on 3 September 1883. The event has also been marked by the opening in Bougival, near Paris, in the chalet which he occupied in the grounds of the Viardot villa, of an excellent museum, which among other objects of interest reproduces with scrupulous care the furnishing of the room in which he died. The equipping of this museum has been very largely due to the devotion and energy of Alexandre Zviguilsky, to whom the thanks of all Turgenev lovers are due.

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ENVIRONMENT

The Nocturnal Drama of Toxic Wastes

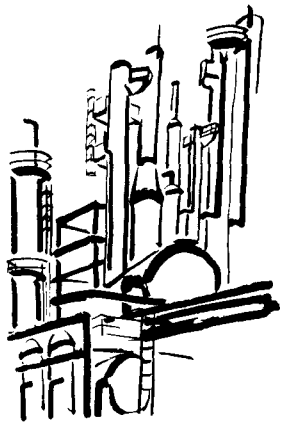
Who Dumps Where, & Why—By EDWARD HUGHES

A county council admitted yesterday that it had disposed of two separate lots of radio-active waste at a public refuse site. Cleveland Council's admission followed a claim by Mr Gordon McClean, local Transport Union secretary, that workers involved were "frantically worried" that they might have been contaminated.

A council spokesman said the men involved in the disposal had been fully informed at the time and made no objection. The statement said the council had disposed of two lots of radio-active waste at Cowpen Bewley, Billingham, last year.

A spokesman for the Department of Environment, which controls disposals, described the radio-activity of the waste as "extremely low level."

DAILY TELEGRAPH
(in November 1983)



ON 10 September 1982, a trailer-truck rolled out of a warehouse in northern Italy and headed toward the border-crossing into France. In the rear were 41 brown steel drums. Innocent enough, thought the French customs officer as he glanced at the papers describing the contents: "halogenous by-products from the treatment of aromatic hydrocarbons." The words were technically accurate, but a more candid label would have featured a skull-and-crossbones—the barrels contained over two tons of poison wastes from the chemical factory at Seveso, near Milan, where six years earlier an explosion had released a cloud of dioxin gas, killing thousands of animals, destroying plant life, and afflicting some 200 people with skin ailments.

For years the owners of the factory, the Swiss pharmaceutical firm Hoffmann-La Roche, had sought to remove the contaminated debris, but every European country that could safely have disposed of it refused entry to the notorious residues. Finally the company turned to the shadowy world of private waste-disposal firms—some of them respectable, others little more than one-man truck contractors who knew how to make cargoes "disappear" by dark of night. Hoffmann-La Roche handed the problem to an Italo-German company named Mannesmann Italiana, which in its turn contacted a French industrial-waste dealer, Bernard Paringaux. There was one stipulation: no one must know where or how Paringaux disposed of the drums.

He promptly arranged for them to vanish in a zig-zag truck ride to the north. For six months there was silence—until the French press got wind of the story, and suddenly all Europe was on the alert. Where were "the 41 drums of death"? Paringaux was arrested by the police, but he refused to say, pleading the secrecy of his contract. Company spokesmen, however, assured the public that the dangerous cargo was safely underground, in an authorised storage place, "under a layer of clay at least five metres deep."

Frantically, the French authorities rushed to check their main waste dumps, but to no avail. Then the rumour spread that the dioxin might be in West Germany; but a search there was also fruitless. Maybe it was in Britain, or somewhere at the bottom of the sea? At last, after 52 days behind bars, Paringaux confessed. On his advice, the authorities went to a disused slaughter-house in the northern French village of Anguilcourt, where all 41 drums of the deadly dioxin were arranged as casually as barrels of vinegar in a pickle-factory.

The long search brought home to Europeans something of the panic felt in the American towns of Love Canal (New York) and Times Beach (Missouri). 800 families had to leave Love Canal in 1979, after illnesses were linked to chemicals leaking from an old dump. More recently, at Times Beach, dioxin residues had been mixed with oil wastes and sprayed on a dusty unpaved road—cleaning it up and moving the residents cost $47 million.

It was money well spent, for dioxin is one of the most powerful poisons known to man, 150,000 times as toxic as cyanide and several hundred times more dangerous than strychnine. So far, it has been tested only on animals, but as John Moore of the US Institute of Environmental Health Sciences puts it, "There is too much potency in this compound to think that humans are not at risk for *something*." Many experts fear that the long-term risk is of birth defects and cancer.

THE CASE OF SEVESO'S wandering dioxin drums proved that there are no frontiers to the problem of toxic waste disposal.

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Every year, Western European factories produce 25 to 30 million tons of "dangerous residues"—pesticide by-products, used oil and grease, solvents for machinery cleaning, heavy metals such as mercury and cadmium, and very occasionally dioxin. Some of the waste can be recycled or used as fuel for factory furnaces, some of it can be incinerated at high temperatures or chemically detoxified. But millions of tons are simply loaded on to trains or trucks and hauled away.

Inside virtually every Western country, existing laws are lax. Internationally, they are non-existent, leading to a vast traffic in dangerous materials, which criss-cross the European continent to thousands of storage places. Much Dutch, West German and Scandinavian chemical waste goes to France and Britain, and Belgium has long been a popular dumping ground for all the big chemical producers. On the other hand, the flow sometimes turns the other way, with the French and British hauling their ugly residues into West Germany. "It's all a matter of prices, of supply and demand", explains an official of one of Britain's biggest treatment plants. "Hauling and disposing of this dangerous waste has become a thriving business in Europe."

In most countries, toxic materials disappear into the earth, either dumped legally in privately-owned licensed pits, quarries and fields open to sun, rain and air, or unloaded illicitly in rivers, canals, community garbage dumps, and old mine-shafts. For truck-owners and dump-operators alike, the profits can be very rewarding. "You'd be surprised", says Professor Aubin Heyndrickx, the chief toxicologist at Belgium's State University of Ghent, "how many farmers are willing to rent one or two of their fields to truck-owners who dig up the top-soil, dump 50 or 100 tons of poisonous powder or liquid chemicals, and then put the earth back on top. . . ." Everything is fine until the poisons begin to trickle down through the sub-soil to the water table.

The results of such surreptitious dumping are potentially disastrous. Dr Mostafa Tolba, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, knows that "undisciplined disposal of these wastes can cause fires, explosions, air, water and land pollution, contamination of food and drinking water, damage to people who get them on their skin or inhale their vapours, and harm to plants and animals." And yet in recent decades, as he says, some wastes have been "dumped with almost complete recklessness."

IN A WORLD where chemical substances are becoming ever more complex, the possible effect of such spillage on this generation's health, and the next generation's genes, is a nightmarish thought—and every month seems to bring new scares.

On the outskirts of Hautrage, in southern Belgium, three 100-metre-deep wells providing drinking water have been closed for four years. The water was polluted by factories dumping dangerous chemical waste into the nearby Grand Courant River.

The West German city of Hanau recently closed down three of the springs that supply its drinking water because analysis showed dangerous solvents. The town officials believe the source of the pollution is a nearby military installation, where traces of solvents are used in vehicle maintenance.

The Netherlands has begun a two-billion-guilder programme to clean up oils and chemicals from over 1,000 sites deemed dangerous to human life. A national survey has shown that an additional 1,000–2,000 sites may eventually need treatment.

The Dutch scare began in March 1980 at the 700-year-old town of Lekkerkerk, 15 kilometres east of Rotterdam. In the late 1960s, the city fathers, needing land for residential expansion, contracted with a Rotterdam firm to fill a nine-hectare marsh on the town's western side as a foundation for new homes. Not everybody was happy with the way the firm went about the job. Dirk Neven, an outspoken member of the town council, complained in May 1970 that, along with rock and gravel, containers of chemicals were being used for in-filling. The council brushed his charges aside impatiently, but in October Neven again protested hotly, saying that the company was "the gangster of the transport world" and demanding that the project be stopped. By now, many townspeople had seen trucks empty hundreds of heavy steel drums on the site, usually in the late evening or at night. But the project was completed, and house-building on the new land began in 1972. By the mid-1970s, families were moving in.

There was trouble from the start: the gas and water pipes, made of PVC, began to fracture. But possibly this was caused by the settling of the new foundations? No, said the repairmen, who had noticed that the earth under many of the homes was a sticky brownish-black, and smelled of chemicals. The barrels had obviously started to leak. Chemical analysis showed that the ground contained waste products from paint manufacture; among them was the toxic xylene, which would make PVC blister and split. Worse, xylene causes nausea, headaches, and eye irritation, and as Professor Heyndrickx confirms, "in strong concentration, it can destroy red and white blood cells alike."

By now, many of the 871 inhabitants of Lekkerkerk West were complaining of the foul stench that rose over the community on warm, windless evenings. Dick Peters, a foreman in the Rotterdam dockyards, first thought it was caused by the boats in the nearby Lek River. Then, one morning early in 1980, he noticed a peculiar taste in his drinking water; so did his family and his neighbours. Analysts were called in and quickly confirmed their fears: the water supply was contaminated by chemicals. Town officials immediately ordered the taps to be turned off, and began to bring in water by tanker-truck.

As the news spread, television crews and reporters rushed to investigate. Many Dutch families live and work on reclaimed land, and anxiety rose throughout the country. Could their homes also have chemical underpinnings? In Lekkerkerk, the 268 endangered families were hastily moved into temporary mobile homes, and excavation teams began the task of removing thousands of tons of contaminated soil from between the concrete pilings that supported their houses. In the process, 1,651 steel drums were pulled out, almost all of them punctured and leaking their chemical contents. The whole mess was hauled away and burned, then replaced by clean sand.

Spurred on by the public outcry, the Dutch government had meanwhile tightened up the regulations. A year earlier, it had

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banned dumping of chemicals anywhere in the Netherlands without a specific licence, and now it started a nationwide search for other potentially dangerous sites. Each municipality was asked to look through its files for possible clues, and newspaper advertisements enlisted public support. A flood of letters poured in. Former chemical workers volunteered information on the location of sites where their companies had once deposited wastes; long-time residents reported where they had seen furtive dumping taking place.

Soon officials had identified the worst problems. They hurried to assess a site at Gouderak, not far from Lekkerkerk, where in a recently-built development overlooking the Yssel River 96 houses had been built on a cocktail of many different chemicals, including highly dangerous pesticide wastes. When I visited the town recently, Gouderak's town archivist, Marinus van Herk, invited me to kneel beside his front porch and sniff. The stench was awful. Henk Kemper, a mechanical engineer, showed me the surrealistic colour photo hung on his living-room wall. "Those rainbow colours aren't modern art", he said ironically. "That's a picture of the foot of our dike, with the oil and chemicals dribbling into the water. . . ."

DANGER WAS ALSO DISCOVERED in the city of Dordrecht, lurking in an old garbage dump, on which 106 houses had been built. Both the Gouderak and the Dordrecht sites are to be destroyed; their residents have been paid to move elsewhere. "It's the only solution", said Albert Eyspaart, an environmental officer of the South Holland provincial government. "The pollution was too much of a health hazard."

Meanwhile, the Dutch river police stepped up their patrol work, searching boats and barges for illicit cargoes. When one well-known waste-disposal firm was caught dumping thousands of tons of toxic products into canals and rivers, their top officials were arrested and sentenced to prison terms ranging from seven months to two-and-a-half years.

BUT TIGHTENING UP in the Netherlands merely meant that Dutch waste-contractors looked harder for ways to ship their residues to other countries. One firm was planning to export shiploads to the Far East, but a horrified Dutch government forbade the deal, mindful of the outcry it would raise in the "Third World." In any case, neighbouring Belgium was a suitable alternative, since the distances were shorter and the laws seductively loose. The Dutch coal-burning electricity industry spotted the huge worked-out clay-pits south of Antwerp, which had once supported a thriving brick-making industry around the town of Rumst. Barges laden with fly-ash (the waste from power stations) were soon mooring daily in the Ruper River and dumping their cargoes. Today, a 200,000-ton mountain of fly-ash, which contains such heavy metals as cadmium, lead and zinc, is a monument to dark Dutch ingenuity. The shipments stopped only when Belgian law was made stricter, in 1983.

The fly-ash could be a long-term health menace to the thousands of Belgians who live nearby. The residents who live on Bosstraat, a hillside road that runs beside the dumps, are especially fearful. "I'm getting scared", said Hendrick Valckaert, a retired brick-maker. "Too many people up here are dying or spending time in hospital. Something's wrong."

Rumst's Police Commissioner agrees. "It's not good", he told me. "On a windy day it looks as if it's snowing up there—a snow-storm of fly-ash." But evidently Robert D'Affnay is resigned to the problem: he has several other dumps in his district and only five men on his force. Although he had filed 27 separate complaints against one dump-owner, all were dismissed by local judges. "Discretion of the court", he shrugs. "What can I do?" And he spends more time on other matters.

BELGIUM'S EXAMPLE is common to much of Europe. Virtually everywhere, waste-control laws are uncoordinated, inconsistent, and riddled with loopholes. Few countries even agree on what is "toxic." Sodium, for instance, which bursts into flame on contact with water and can cause severe burns to moist skin, is on West Germany's list of hazardous substances, but not on Britain's. France prohibits all dumping of liquid chemicals, but Britain encourages it so long as it is mixed with dry household waste, which will absorb it—a blotting-paper policy known as "co-disposal."

The British government leaves licensing of dumping grounds and control of hazardous substances largely to the nation's 165 local councils. But despite their efforts to enforce controls, a dumper can still get away with almost anything. Near Birmingham, the Brasway Waste Disposal Company dumped three million gallons of an oily substance into the stream behind its plant before a zealous inspector spotted the gushing pipe and took the firm to court, with photographs as evidence. Three years ago, a tiny company called Riafield Ltd signed contracts with a Dutch firm for the handling of a toxic liquid waste which can damage humans when undiluted and even in low concentration can destroy aquatic life. Without correctly notifying the local councils, Riafield dispersed some 30,000 tons of the gooey mess in storage tanks which it had leased along the British coast. Having received payment, the company then went out of business, leaving the storage firms with the sticky residues.

In France, a "stick-and-carrot" policy is in force. The stick is each region's government-appointed Commissioner and his staff of inspectors responsible for enforcement. The carrot is ANRED, an environmental agency that attempts to educate and encourage by dispensing subsidies or loans to factories which recycle or detoxify poison wastes. Both sticks and carrots are small. There are, for example, only some 600 inspectors to watch over the 500,000 industrial sites which are deemed a risk to the environment. As elsewhere in Europe, perhaps one-third of France's hazardous waste simply "disappears."

"We can't keep an eye on all of it", admits Jacqueline Aloisi de Lardenal, who is the head of "waste pollution" in the French Ministry of Environment. Too true. During the hunt for the 41 barrels of Seveso's dioxin, French officials searched the big dump at Roumazières and stumbled on 21 tons of arsenic waste from the Breton chemical firm of Grand Paroisse; it had been illegally stored on the site since April 1982. Red-faced managers called it "an error", and humbly apologised. The inspectors noted wryly that the co-owner of the dump was Bernard Paringaux.

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West Germany also has a manpower problem. With a comprehensive set of waste-disposal rules—some 60 laws, regulations, and guidelines—the Germans proudly claim they can keep track of all chemical waste from producer to transporter and its final destruction. But can they? In the state of Hesse alone, the system brings in 130,000 reports yearly. How many people process this avalanche? "Just half a dozen of us", ruefully admits Fritz Vahrenholt, an official of Hesse's state ministry of environment.

AT BEST, recent legislation has been largely a matter of closing the stable door after the horse has fled. All over Europe, factories dumped their wastes indiscriminately, for decades, even generations, until the first laws began to emerge in the 1970s. In Britain, there was no law at all when in 1968 Coalite Ltd suffered a Seveso-like explosion at Bolsover in Derbyshire. Coalite buried the resulting dioxin waste "somewhere" in the area, and now merely informs nervous villagers that it does not remember exactly where.

Decades can go by before the effects of lethal waste percolate through the soil to the water table. A man in the North Rhine-Westphalia town of Ratingen died after drinking a glass of water laced with arsenic; the poison had been buried nearby in 1918. This sort of thing terrifies the inhabitants of Grosskrotzenburg, in Hesse. They live near one of the most poisonous dumps in Europe, nicknamed "Plaumann's Park" after the notorious waste-disposer Siegfried Plaumann, who in the early 1970s discarded 350 tons of cyanide and other lethal chemicals on the community dump. Plaumann was sentenced to two years in jail for his work, but this is small consolation for the people of the surrounding area who nervously wonder if and when the poison will reach their underground water table.

A similar fear is felt by those who live in the rolling countryside south of Paris. In the valley town of Boissy-aux-Cailles, near the Forest of Fontainebleau, the water flows underground from Amponville, a few kilometres away. Near Amponville, in 1963, a chemical firm named La Quinoleine (which manufactured pesticides) dumped in an open field several hundred drums containing highly toxic chlorophenal. When concentrated, even the vapour of this compound can cause brain damage. The leaking containers were, fortunately, too far from the town to cause illness, but the distant stench brought a deluge of complaints. Finally, the firm brought in several tons of sand to cover the barrels.

That ended the smell, but the dribbling fluid continued to leak into the soil. The Ministry of Health's laboratory for Seine-et-Marne has been watching the area with great care. "The water at the site is very dangerous", says Bernard Levin, deputy director of the laboratory, "but so far it has not affected the drinking water of Amponville or Boissy. Of course, what the next few years will bring I do not know. . . ."

IS THERE ANY safe place in Europe to store the odd barrel of toxic waste? Perhaps one. In West Germany, near the city of Kassel, is a deep and apparently leak-proof mine where salt deposited by the sea 250 million years ago used to be extracted. It is now the property of Kali und Salz, a subsidiary of the giant chemical firm BASF. Man-made tunnels, 700 metres below the surface, hold 350,000 tons of extremely toxic waste encased in steel drums; an additional 35,000 tons goes in each year. The drums should never leak, because the extremely low humidity prevents corrosion. Even if they did, the barrels are surrounded by 300 metres of solid salt, which in turn is encased in a wall of clay 100 metres thick. There is room in the mine for "30 more years of canned poisons", and when that is used up, space can be made simply by digging out more salt. For Kali und Salz, it is in fact less of a salt mine than a gold mine: the company charges depositors 196 D-marks per ton to look after their waste, taking in six million D-marks a year.

It is far cheaper (30 D-marks per ton) to dump dangerous materials on to the Communists of East Germany, for the DDR has also gone into the waste-storage business—to earn capitalistic hard currency. The East Germans don't even bother to put it underground. Six kilometres from the West German border is a 250-hectare site where some 100 big trucks roll in each day from West Germany, the Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe, and dump almost anything they like. The dump, near the village of Schönberg, will be usable "until the end of the century." By then, the garbage mountain will rise 25 metres above the surrounding countryside and be clearly visible to the nearest city, which happens to be West Germany's Lübeck! Even at cut-rate prices, the dump is so lucrative that the East Germans are planning a spur-rail link to the West German frontier; entire trainloads of trash can then be brought directly from Hamburg and Rotterdam. If a few

"Acid Rain"

ACID RAIN, *that seemingly modern phrase that has been beating down on the Environmental Protection Agency, was triumphantly tracked to 1975. A journalist from Philadelphia quickly bid 1972 with a story he wrote for "The Philadelphia Bulletin" about a United Nations conference in Stockholm.*

His ace was promptly trumped by a correspondent who happened to be leafing through the 14th edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1929), and found under "Smoke and Smoke Prevention" these words:

> **"Evil Effects of Smoke—Acid rain is also directly harmful to plant life and affects adversely the soil, although soot is a valuable manure."**

From the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, a professor reached for "Air and Rain, the Beginnings of a Chemical Climatology" by Robert Angus Smith, published in London in 1872, probably written in 1858:

> **"It has often been observed that the stones and bricks of buildings . . . crumble more readily in large towns, where much coal is burnt, than elsewhere. I was led to attribute this effect to the slow, but constant, action of the acid rain."**

What does this teach us? First, it reminds us to write "found so far" after every "earliest use" of a phrase, which is a precaution to writers and a challenge to readers. Next, it shows that not everyone is staring at television or reading the latest newspaper; somebody, somewhere—even as you read this—is reading an acid-stained climatology text.

William Safire

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE *(Paris)*

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tons of chemicals lie under the assorted debris, the East Germans probaby won't object: the water table tilts sharply towards the West. . . .

East Germany may well be depositing some of its own hazardous wastes at Schönberg, and perhaps some of the toxic trash of its East European partners as well, for "industrial pollution" is quite as much a problem east of the Iron Curtain as it is in the West. In the Hungarian town of Vac, 40 kilometres up the Danube from Budapest, health inspectors had to shut off the water three years ago because chemicals were leaking from a dump used by the Chinoin pharmaceutical company. In Poland's Lublin district, a half-dozen factories dumped heavy metal residues in nearby open pits; and in the wells around Krasnik Lubelski the water was found to contain 26 times the safe level of mercury. As for Russia, things there are even worse, thanks to "crash industrial programmes" and a general lack of safety controls.

Is there an "ideal solution" to the danger of toxic waste? Denmark's municipalities banded together in 1971 to establish Kommunekemi, the world's first "national incinerator" and chemical treatment plant. It handles household waste such as old paint buckets, pesticide remnants and mercury batteries, and also heavy industrial residues—solvents, glues, degreasing chemicals. Everything that can contaminate is collected at 296 stations scattered around Denmark, and then loaded into Kommunekemi's fleet of freight-wagons and tankers for the journey to a maze of tubes and flame in the little town of Nyborg in the south. There it goes up with a roar at 1,200°C in the furnaces, or is rendered harmless in chemical baths. It appears to be a remarkably successful system, which last year disposed of almost 65,000 tons of waste. "I'd guess we get over half of all the dangerous stuff produced in the country", shouted the company's research manager, Per Riemann, trying to make his voice heard over the deafening roar of a giant incinerator. "We also serve another purpose", he added. "Over 65% of the heating used in Nyborg comes from us. We sell heating to the town at a very low price. . . ."

Such a solution fits neatly into a nation of only five million people, but would it not also work in France and Germany, which spew out vastly greater quantities of waste? "They could do it on a regional basis", says Kommunekemi's technical director, John Clausen. Similar systems are already in use in the West German states of Bavaria and Hesse, and the US state of New Jersey is now seriously considering the idea.

Some Danish firms feared the scheme would raise their costs dramatically, since individual companies must pay to transport their waste to Nyborg, and for its treatment. But Clausen says: "There was very little to worry about. For most companies, the extra expense was less than 1%. If they simply dumped the waste, it would cost the nation far more in the long run to clean it up."

There is, I found, more and more sympathy in the European Community for centralised waste disposal. Kenneth Collins, chairman of the Environmental & Consumer Affairs Committee in the European Parliament, sees it as a moral issue: "It is only fair and decent that a waste-producing industry spend whatever is necessary to prevent its activity from polluting our society."

But while other countries ponder "the Danish solution", there is an urgent need for tougher laws and far better law-enforcement to bring the chemical cowboys into line. One hopeful sign is a move inside the EEC to bring more discipline into the transport of toxic wastes across national frontiers. At the moment, it is impossible to trace a cargo after it has moved from one country to another (as the nimble Bernard Paringaux so clearly demonstrated). The EEC is trying to get all its members to back a plan requiring prior notification to governments along the entire path of a dangerous cargo, from the waste-producing factory to the transporter and to the dump-operator at the final destination. With such a "trip-ticket" system of controls, a start could be made toward wiping out illicit deposits—and helping to safeguard the health of future generations.

Skin Flick

Milky cats, the nudes purr,
slow-stroke legs and breasts
with delicate fingers.
Lips linger long on lips.
Erotic with breathing
the air swells blue.

Swing doors sigh as you leave.
In the bare foyer
usherettes stand dumpy
in housecoats. They dandle
torches and suck hard on
aniseed balls.

Wes Magee

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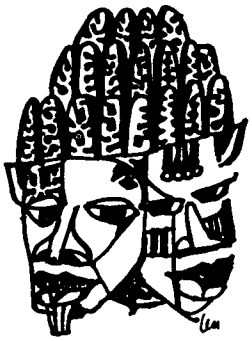
Black Africa: The Living Legacy of Dying Colonialism

By Peter Bauer & Basil Yamey



THERE IS a stereotype of the historical experience of British Colonial Africa which holds that these territories stagnated or even retrogressed during most of the colonial era, as a result of administrative neglect and commercial exploitation. According to the same stereotype, the rulers mended their ways somewhat in the terminal phase of colonialism, and concerned themselves more actively with the welfare of their subjects.

Both parts of this stereotype are very nearly the opposite of the truth. British colonial rule before the 1930s benefited the great majority of Africans. But it offered little scope for the political ambitions of the limited groups who were later to come into prominence and form the political nation. These Africans benefited greatly, at the expense of the inarticulate and politically ineffective majority, from the policies introduced in the closing period of colonialism.

In British Africa, as elsewhere, colonial conquest had often been accompanied by bloodshed, and early colonial rule frequently involved the levy of forced labour.[1] This phase was largely over by the end of the 19th century, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries British colonial administrations governed firmly but lightly. They did not attempt to control closely the lives and activities of their subjects. Taxation was modest, and people enjoyed virtually complete personal freedom, including the freedom to choose their own activities, to move around the country unhindered, and to dispose of their incomes as they wished. Tribal warfare, slavery, and slave-trading—formerly widespread or endemic—had been effectively suppressed.

The most important guiding principles of administration were those of limited government (including limited intervention in economic life); reliance on local institutions, as far as possible; acceptance of traditional leaders and local councils as the representatives of African opinion and interests; and gradual evolution and reform in preparation for independence.

These principles were epitomised by Joyce Cary in his reminiscences of his life in the colonial service in Nigeria.[2]

> "It was the rule then in the Nigerian Service, and has always been one of the guiding principles of British colonial policy, to preserve local law and custom as far as possible, and to do nothing that might break the continuity of local government. Tribal chiefs and tribal councils were to be maintained, and progress made by educating chiefs, by improving their administrative machine, and by a general development of trade, roads, public services—which (as experience shows) by itself modifies the whole situation and can (if that end is kept in view) quite quickly build up a class capable of some share in the government, on the first elementary representative committees. . . .
>
> But the first principle was absolute: Do not break the continuity. Do not attempt to force a constitution on the people. However good it may seem, however suitable to the place and time (and this is granting a lot), it will be hated and sabotaged. So it will serve only as a bar to all constitutional development. . . .
>
> The essential points of emphasis in our administration were continuity and balance. We were not to destroy native rule and economic custom, but to develop on their own roots. . . ."

British colonial government was readily accepted because it followed these principles, and this in turn made government relatively easy and inexpensive.

The accepted guidelines of colonial policies by no means implied governmental inactivity, but required the effective performance of traditional and necessary functions. These included protection against external aggression; the establishment and maintenance of public security (which encompassed suppression of slavery and slave-trading and also of tribal warfare); the effective management of monetary and fiscal

[1] These matters are more fully discussed in P.T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion* (1981), Chapter 9, Section 5.

[2] Joyce Cary, *Selected Essays* (1976), pp. 85, 97, 100.

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systems; construction and maintenance of transport facilities; provision of some basic educational, public health, and veterinary services; and some agricultural extension work.

In West Africa, efficient performance of these tasks helped to promote the spread of cash crops for export and for domestic use, while the growth of a large volume of imports provided incentives for improved economic performance.

Conditions of existence were transformed over large areas between the 1880s and the 1930s, primarily through the emergence and spread of crops such as groundnuts, palm oil, palm kernels, coffee, cotton, kola nuts, and cocoa. In his book *The Economic Revolution in British West Africa* (1926), Alan McPhee, economic historian of West Africa, wrote that the changes brought about by the rise of the cocoa industry represented the superimposition of the 20th century A.D. on the 20th century B.C.

This extensive transformation took place relatively smoothly. People were not much concerned as to who was in power, so long as government maintained public security and facilitated individual endeavour but did not impinge directly on their personal activities, or obviously and directly affect their livelihood, or abruptly dislocate their established ways. The early colonial administrations respected the traditions of different societies, and people voluntarily adjusted to newly emerging economic opportunities.[3]

"Public affairs vex no man." In these conditions, Dr Johnson's dictum fully applied. Ordinary Africans, like ordinary people the world over, are more interested in not being misgoverned than they are in constitutional forms. Firm but limited government, which addressed itself to primary tasks, was therefore agreeable to the population at large—a fact rarely acknowledged by African politicians.

BETWEEN THE 1930s and the 1950s the interrelated guiding principles, which had been widely regarded as almost axiomatic, were totally reversed. The process was well under way by 1940, gained momentum in the 1940s and 1950s, and was complete by the end of colonial rule. One system had been superseded by its exact opposite.

The idea that gradual political and social evolution should take place before independence was replaced by insistence on the early introduction of Westminster-style democracy, interpreted as universal suffrage—a system alien to British Africa. The prospective heirs of British rule were no longer the traditional rulers and councils but articulate Westernised groups, mostly people in contact with their opposite numbers in Britain. Limited government intervention in economic affairs was supplanted (except in subsistence farming) by an increasing preoccupation with detailed and comprehensive economic controls. At the same time, the British colonial administrators neglected basic functions of government, including even the maintenance of public security.[4]

The abrupt overthrow of the main pillars of pre-War colonial policy was by no means welcomed by ordinary Africans. Some candid observations by a prominent Nigerian politician of the early post-War years are instructive:

> "Given a choice from among white officials, Chiefs and educated Nigerians as the principal rulers of the country, the illiterate man today would exercise his preference for the three in the order in which they are named. He is convinced, *and he has good reasons to be,* that he can always get better treatment from the white man than he could hope to get from the Chiefs, and the educated elements."[5]

Those brought to the fore in the late colonial period were largely urban groups—articulate, Westernised politicians, and their allies in the military, in the professions, and in business. Many of them, including the educated, had little respect for the rural population and its ways, and were therefore apt to look down on the great majority of their countrymen. It was not inevitable that this particular class should succeed the colonial rulers. It was certainly not inevitable that the new rulers should be handed a system of close economic controls which placed the bulk of the population at their mercy. The controls need never have been established, or, failing that, could have been dismantled before the end of colonial rule. Their introduction was particularly significant, for without it the other changes might not have had such durable, pervasive, and often violent repercussions.

By the end of the colonial period, an extensive range of economic controls operated in British Africa. They included state monopoly in major branches of industry and commerce (notably in the purchase and exports of major agricultural products); numerous state-owned and operated enterprises, and official licensing of commercial and industrial activity (including the establishment and operation of businesses); ethnic quotas in employment, and in the allocation of licences; comprehensive control over international transactions; restrictions on the external and domestic movement of people, capital, and commodities; officially prescribed prices and wages; and large-scale state support to cooperative societies (which are in effect extensions of government departments rather than the voluntary cooperative societies often seen in the West).

The incoming African rulers welcomed the various controls because these gave them a close grip over their subjects, and enabled them to pursue more effectively their personal and political purposes. They extended these controls whenever they could do so.[6]

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[3] The colonial administrators sometimes used African chiefs in attempts to enforce unpopular measures and practices on agricultural producers. These usually ill-considered interventions helped to prejudice the position of the chiefs, and so to ease the way for the new nationalist politicians.

[4] The riots in Accra in 1948 and in Enugu in 1949, in which many lives were lost and much property destroyed, were examples of inadequate maintenance of public security. In Lagos in the summer of 1951, groups of strong-arm men openly flouted the law and manhandled people who wanted to work in defiance of an unofficial strike. At the same time, the Nigerian government extended the system of export monopoly to include sunflower seed, a commodity so unimportant that it was not listed separately in most official trade statistics.

[5] Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947), quoted in Sir Frederick Pedler, *Main Currents of West African History 1940–1978* (1979). Italics added.

[6] Somewhat similar sequences took place in other former African

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In the 1930s, belief in the efficacy of state action for the solution of economic problems, and a corresponding distrust of market forces, had gained ground rapidly in Britain and elsewhere. These ideas were strongly held and propounded by influential Civil Servants in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Service during the period from the eve of the Second World War until decolonisation. The group included Sir Andrew Cohen, who was Head of the African Department of the Colonial Office; Sir Jock McPherson (Lord McPherson), who became Governor of Nigeria and eventually head of the Colonial Office; and Sir Hugh Foot (Lord Caradon) who was Chief Secretary of Nigeria. Several of them took for granted the case for the most diverse forms of state economic intervention, including the restrictive licensing of trade. They tended also to support Westernised African intellectuals rather than the traditional local rulers and authorities.

This so-called "progressive" group was fortunate in its political leaders. Some of the Secretaries of State for the Colonies over this period were ready to accept the proposals of their most articulate officials, especially if these accorded with widely prevailing ideas. For different reasons two of the more active Secretaries of State—Arthur Creech Jones (a dedicated Fabian Socialist) and Oliver Lyttelton (Lord Chandos)—sympathised with the *dirigiste* group.

Lyttelton, under whose régime state export monopolies were finally imposed on the unfortunate farmers, was a Conservative whose political career was sandwiched between two spells in private business. He was an uncritical supporter of large-scale investment spending, both public and private, and was unsympathetic to small-scale economic activities, including small-scale farming.

The centralisation of decision-making in the Colonial Office and in the Secretariats, and the diminution of the powers of governors and district officers, promoted the diffusion of controls in the late colonial period. Restrictive licensing spread from the East African to the West African colonies, while state export monopolies spread from West to East Africa.

Ideology alone might not have brought about such comprehensive economic controls had they not also suited influential interests in commerce and in the public sector. Private interests lay behind the introduction of restrictive licensing for cotton ginneries in East Africa and the official allocation of quotas for the buying of exports in West Africa. Both of these measures led to much wider controls.

The appeal of state controls to contemporary politicians is familiar, but in the context of Africa their appeal to the Civil Service was particularly important. The controls and the implementing organisations extended the role and power of ambitious Civil Servants, creating influential and lucrative positions and helping many of them to secure honours ranging from modest OBEs to august GCMGs and peerages.

According to the perverse priorities of contemporary government, the creation of specific organisations and the expenditure of large sums of money can lead to recognition even if the money is clearly wasted or the activities run counter to their declared objectives or to acknowledged principles of policy. Conversely, achievement—even great achievement—goes unrecognised if it cannot readily be attributed to some specific action or to particular individuals. Thus no one received a high honour for the development of Onitsha, an important market town in Eastern Nigeria which grew steadily over several decades from insignificant beginnings: by 1950, its two principal markets had some 12,000 separate sales outlets. (The rise of Onitsha was made possible by the establishment of public security, which was virtually non-existent in Eastern Nigeria as late as 1890, but was taken for granted by the 1930s.) Numerous honours, however, flowed from the establishment and operation of Marketing Boards, whose activities impoverished the farmers and promoted political tension and corruption.

The economic controls were generally unrelated to their declared objectives, notably the promotion of the economic and social advance of the population at large. Indeed, they damaged the interests of the population for the benefit of certain sectional interests. Their introduction was especially anomalous in West Africa, where rapid and extensive economic progress had already occurred, very largely under the impetus of the private trading which many of the controls set out to inhibit. Progress there had, in fact, been so rapid that the changes it engendered set up problems of their own—as was observed by scholars of widely differing persuasions.[7]

State monopoly of export was introduced to West Africa very soon after the outbreak of World War II. A plan for the wartime organisation of the cocoa industry was submitted to the Colonial Office, and in November 1939 it was accepted, with only minor modifications. Henceforth, the British government announced, it would buy all cocoa offered for sale in British West Africa. Its purchasing agency would have a statutary monopoly of export, and cocoa would be bought for the agency under a system of officially enforceable quotas allocated to established merchants who would act as its buying agents.

The declared objective was to prevent the local price of

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colonies. But in Francophone Africa at any rate, the changes were less abrupt, chiefly because more *dirigiste* policies were pursued in these territories than in British Africa before World War II, and also because the new ruling groups were on the whole numerically less important and less powerful than in the former British colonies.

The following passage comes from an unexpected source—the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris (*Development Co-operation, 1982 Review*, p. 17): "Another heritage from their colonial eras seems to be a source of current difficulties, although it is seldom cited by African leaders; this is the colonial administrations' latter-day penchant for extensive economic controls and state monopolies. This precedent may have predisposed many new African governments, despite their very limited cadres of skilled administrators and analysts, to opt for state enterprises, especially in export and agriculture, and for controls on trade and investment, regulation of prices, and gambles on large-scale state-owned or state-subsidised development schemes." The author does not appreciate that the damaging effects of these policies do not depend upon the size and efficiency of the cadres.

[7] A selection of these opinions—by Mary Kingsley, A. McPhee and Sir Keith Hancock—is quoted in P.T. Bauer, *Dissent on Development* (2nd ed., 1976), Chapter 1.

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cocoa collapsing as a result of the shrinking market and the wartime shortage of shipping. But in that case there was no need for monopoly of export—a government guarantee to buy at a fixed price would have sufficed. And what need was there for quotas, when the market was made unlimited by the government's guarantee to buy all cocoa for sale? The anomaly was evident in the very nature of the quotas, which were not for specified amounts, but for specified percentages of the unspecified total quantity of cocoa bought by merchants on behalf of the government.

This quota system was an official version of the periodic market-sharing agreements of the leading West African merchants, which were designed to restrain competition and protect their trading margins. Merchants bought the principal export products in accordance with percentage shares agreed among themselves. Those who exceeded their quotas had to pay compensation to those who had bought less, the penalties being calculated roughly as the difference between export prices and variable costs.

These buying cartels, a recurrent feature of West African history, were generally unstable. Participants evaded their obligations, and the arrangements were unpopular with the farmers, who opposed them as best they could. The best known of the cartels, the Cocoa Buying Agreement of 1937 (the cocoa pool), had sparked off the Gold Coast producers' strike (the cocoa hold-up) when for some eight months farmers refused to sell cocoa to members of the pool. For a period trade was practically at a standstill. After protracted negotiations between the authorities and representatives of the merchants and the farmers, the merchants agreed to suspend the pool, but not to abolish it—a situation which continued until the outbreak of war.

The plan accepted by the government had been put forward by the Cocoa Committee of the Association of West African Merchants (AWAM)—a cartel headed by the United Africa Company (UAC), a powerful subsidiary of Unilever. The buying quotas it imposed were to be based on past performance, mainly on market shares in 1935–37, and were identical with those of the 1937 cocoa pool, even in minor detail. The main difference was that the new statutory body, with its penalties and rewards, could force merchants to comply with its terms, making the system watertight. Most important of all, it would exclude newcomers.

Previous cartel agreements had frequently been undermined by established traders who were not party to them, and also by the emergence of new competitors, known as interlopers. On the eve of the Second World War the most dangerous interloper in living memory had recently emerged as a formidable competitor to AWAM members. This was A. G. Leventis, former General Manager of one of the largest companies within the UAC group. In 1937 he was dismissed from his post but, supported by Barclays Bank and by a firm of Lancashire textile exporters, he set up his own company in the Gold Coast within a few weeks of his dismissal. Although trading conditions in 1937–39 were unpropitious because of the cocoa hold-up and the 1938–39 depression, A. G. Leventis and Company progressed rapidly.

After some transitional arrangements the cocoa export monopoly was handled under the Colonial Office by the West African Cocoa Control Board (which subsequently became the West African Produce Control Board—WAPCB). At first Leventis was given no quota, but after protest to the Colonial Office the firm received a modest allocation.

AFTER THE JAPANESE conquest of South-east Asia, export monopoly was extended to cover oil palm produce (palm-oil, palm-kernels) and groundnuts, and eventually also cotton. Here again monopoly of exports was coupled with a system of statutory buying quotas. The ostensible ground for the extension of export monopoly was the urgent need to expand supplies of vegetable oil and oil seeds to replace those lost in the Far East. Thus, while the rationalisation for the cocoa export monopoly had been a threatened collapse of the price because of excess supplies and a shrinking market, the rationalisation here was a threatened deficiency of supplies—an exactly opposite problem for which the same solution was offered. It should have been obvious that monopoly of export and buying quotas were not required to increase supplies. Indeed, such arrangements were bound to reduce supplies, as producers received lower prices from a monopoly than from buyers in competition with one another.

In West Africa this effect was compounded by the fact that the Produce Control Board received far lower prices from the Ministry of Food than were paid for comparable supplies from elsewhere. In addition, the Board systematically withheld from the producers an appreciable share of the proceeds by specifying low prices to be paid to producers by the buying agents (the merchants). The quota system stifled competition among these merchants so that the farmers rarely received more than the prescribed minimum price.

Thus it was the desire of merchants for statutory quotas that brought about the export monopolies of West Africa. Far-reaching economic controls had been established (ostensibly at any rate) as temporary wartime measures. But the familiar forces of self-perpetuation soon asserted themselves, and the controls were extended in scope and duration. Soon after the War the authorities in the United Kingdom and West Africa announced that the export monopoly of the West African Marketing Boards would be maintained. In 1946 the British Government announced in a White Paper that the official export monopoly over West African cocoa would continue indefinitely; in 1948 the Government of Nigeria announced the continuation of state export monopolies over all Nigerian crops. The declared purpose of these arrangements was the stabilisation of producer prices, to be achieved by fixing prices in advance each season, and so shielding producers from short-term and cyclical price fluctuations.

Both during and after the War, the authorities stated that the export monopolies would on no account be used for taxing producers by withholding money from them. In fact, the system developed into one of exceedingly heavy taxation. During the War the Boards had already begun to accumulate sizable surpluses, and this process escalated greatly between the end of the War and the end of colonial rule. The ability of the authorities to tax the farmers derived from monopoly of export, which enabled them to pay the farmers far less than the

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market price for their products. Most were small-scale farmers, many with annual incomes of only a few pounds. They were, in effect, made to pay taxes at rates equivalent to those levied in Britain only on the very rich.

The system was handed over *in toto* to the independent incoming governments. The West African Marketing Boards served as a model for similar organisations throughout British Africa and in various other British dependencies. In all of these areas, the state export monopolies served as prime instruments for politicising life, for increasing the power of the rulers over their subjects, and for providing them with a major financial power base. (The Gold Coast-Ghana Cocoa Marketing Board served this role for many years for Nkrumah.)

The vast funds of the Boards, hundreds of millions of pounds, accrued to people who had previously thought in terms of modest sums at most, and who had little experience of government and little or no sympathy for the majority of the governed.

THE OPERATION of the Marketing Boards in the closing years of colonial rule clearly violated the formal undertakings given by the British Government and the local administrations.[8] When on separate occasions this point was put to Oliver Lyttelton, then Colonial Secretary, and to Sir Andrew Cohen, then head of the African Department of the Colonial Office, each of them justified the policy in almost identical terms by saying that there was no future anyway for the peasant in Africa.[9]

IMPORT LICENSING was another form of economic control in which chance events much affected developments far beyond its immediate impact.

During the War, the import trade in West Africa was highly profitable under a régime of import restrictions and in the absence of effective consumer rationing and retail price control. In such circumstances, a régime of restrictive import controls conferred windfall profits on some intermediaries. The grant of a licence to import goods was virtually a gift of money to the recipients—and to the traders who were fortunate enough to be able to buy supplies from them at the controlled price. The importers and the favoured traders obtained the difference between the landed cost of the goods and their price in the uncontrolled final transactions with the consumers.

The prospects of large risk-free profits resulted in persistent excess demand, and a scramble for import licences and supplies at controlled prices. If traders sold below market clearing prices, they had to ration supplies to their customers—a situation which elicited charges of favouritism and led to tension, particularly when favoured customers could so readily resell their allocation at higher prices.

Import licensing was introduced in the Gold Coast soon after the outbreak of war, and remained in force during the early post-War years. Its scope and severity varied from time to time, but it tended to become increasingly comprehensive. It was applied relatively leniently to imports from sterling-area sources, or to imports for which shipping was more readily available (some ships would otherwise have carried only ballast on the inward journey, since most West African exports were much bulkier than imports). Because neither the Colonial Office nor the local government had the required experience for administering the controls, the authorities relied for this purpose on AWAM, which was both a cartel of merchants and a trade association.

AWAM therefore effectively determined import control strategy. This was important in such matters as the extension of licensing to supplies which made no substantial demands on shipping or foreign exchange, and in the choice of criteria for allocation of licences (whether, for instance, "past performance" should be based on a merchant's total imports, or on the imports of a particular commodity, or on imports from a particular country in the selected base period).

From 1942, decisions in these matters consistently favoured AWAM members and specifically discriminated against A.G. Leventis—although the principal AWAM advisor to the authorities was a man of unquestioned personal integrity, and had no personal animosity towards him.

From its start in 1937, A.G. Leventis and Company progressed rapidly in the import trade and by 1939 was a major importer. It continued this progress until licensing became extensive around 1941, and to some extent even thereafter. The firm succeeded in tapping new sources of supply in the Far East, South Africa and South America. From 1942, these supplies were increasingly subjected to official restrictions even when they required no foreign exchange, or came in ships carrying ballast. In spite of these restrictions, often plainly discriminatory, the firm continued to prosper and expand.

Between 1945 and 1948, the tensions engendered by import licensing and the attendant excess demand cumulated rapidly as a result of two unrelated events whose effects were compounded by their fortuitous coincidence.

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1945, UAC and some other AWAM firms made formal representation to the government, alleging wholesale corruption in the operation of import licensing in favour of A.G. Leventis and Company and some other Levantine and Asian firms. The government appointed the Martindale Commission to investigate the matter. Its chairman was a judge of the High Court of the Gold Coast. After a few weeks of perfunctory work, the Commission reported that Leventis, and to a lesser extent the other accused firms, had bribed key officials on a scale which subverted the operation of import

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[8] The official undertakings given to the British Parliament, that the Marketing Boards would not be used as instruments of taxation, were unusually explicit and specific. Thus a White Paper, Command 6950, 1946, stated:
"It will be apparent from the above description of the boards' proposed method of operation that there will be no question of their making a profit at the expense of West African cocoa producers . . . on the average of a period of years . . . the average price paid in West Africa will be substantially equal to the average net price realized on world markets, and the boards' buying and selling transactions will, therefore, approximately balance."

[9] A letter in *The Times*, 20 July 1951, by "Your Correspondent recently in Nigeria" (this was, in fact, Oliver Woods, the newspaper's Colonial Editor), supported the persistent underpayment of farmers on the ground that it prevented the emergence of *kulaks* in Nigeria.

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controls. Leventis and members of his staff, who were shown the report a few days before publication, promptly protested that its major findings were untrue. One of the accused officials threatened to sue the Commissioners for libel: his passport showed that he was not even in the Gold Coast at the time when he was alleged to have improperly issued an import licence to Leventis.

The government nevertheless published the Report. Its publication was followed by the intensification of an already virulent press campaign against the government and AWAM, The principal instrument in the campaign was the *Accra Evening News*. This major local newspaper was edited by Kwame Nkrumah, who had recently returned to the Gold Coast and who attained national prominence through this campaign.

In those days, West African press campaigns were apt to be virulent. This one differed from others in that its charges were highly specific and well-documented, and the government was forced to appoint a second Commission with Mr Eric Sachs (subsequently Lord Justice Sachs) as sole Commissioner. The Sachs Commission, in effect a retrial of the case, began its public sittings in the autumn of 1947. The press campaign continued during its hearings, which for weeks on end regularly brought out information damaging to the government, to AWAM, and to the Martindale Report.

The Sachs Report, published in 1948, effectively overturned the major allegations of the Martindale Report. It supported some residual charges of corruption, but these were of such minor importance that the government decided to drop the case. These events raised the political temperature in an already highly charged atmosphere.

The press campaign was financed at least partly by Leventis, who also supplied it with documentary material, some of it derived from AWAM merchants who disapproved of UAC's behaviour. Leventis was well aware that in supporting the press campaign, and Nkrumah's newspaper in particular, he could be unleashing forces which might prove uncontrollable and eventually greatly damage expatriate trading interests, including his own business. He thoroughly understood the threat to his position posed by the unrelenting hostility of the top management of the United Africa Company, an organisation then at the peak of its power in West Africa. But he was convinced that without such a campaign he could not get the Martindale findings reversed.

Other events exacerbated political tension in the Gold Coast during this period. In the summer of 1947, as a result of one of the recurrent sterling crises of the early post-War period, the Gold Coast Government announced that during the 1947–48 cocoa season there would be substantial import cuts. This unexpected reduction was certain to cause hardship and unrest. Moreover, since the reductions were effected through specific controls, they were bound to increase windfall gains to those trading firms who received licences, and to their privileged customers, thus exacerbating the tensions inherent in specific controls unaccompanied by effective consumer rationing.

In the winter of 1947–48 an acute supply shortage developed, leaving a persistently wide gap between open market prices and the prices at which imports were available to merchants and their preferred customers. There was incessant agitation for more licences and supplies, accompanied by accusations of profiteering and favouritism. These developments coincided with the hearings of the Sachs Commission and the press campaign which accompanied it. In January 1948 the tensions produced civil unrest, which rapidly developed into full-scale riots and looting.[10] Some twenty people were killed in police actions designed to control the riots.

These events accelerated constitutional changes in the Gold Coast, enhanced Nkrumah's political position, and gave him the edge over the older generation of political leaders. In 1946 he had been practically unknown in the Gold Coast; by late 1948 he was a leading, even a dominant, political figure.

The events served to undermine the position and self-confidence of the government, but they had a further, less obvious but not insignificant, result. Some politically uncommitted Civil Servants, including the then governors of the Gold Coast and Nigeria, inferred from what had taken place that the power of the European merchants was excessive, and that it was their activities which were responsible for political tension, including the Accra riots. They threw their weight behind the maintenance of wartime controls, especially the continuation of the Marketing Boards. This response was misplaced; without the official controls, AWAM had little effective market power, especially in the import trade, as was clear from the rise of Leventis. The political tensions had in fact been largely brought about by the wartime controls and their method of operation.[11]

ECONOMIC CONTROLS of the kind we have described produce certain familiar results. They restrict both the range and variety of external contacts and the movement of people and goods within the territories. They retard the spread of new ideas, methods, and attitudes; and they reduce incentives and opportunities. They divorce output from consumer requirements, and obstruct the effective deployment of resources. They hinder the expansion of efficient producers and the establishment of new enterprises.

They also have less familiar and more lasting consequences. Close economic controls politicise economic life. The enhanced significance of political power intensifies the struggle for it, which is bound in turn to affect the deployment of people's energies and resources—a major determinant of economic performance in any society.

[10] These effects were foreseen by the late H. S. Booker, lecturer at the London School of Economics, who was at the time on secondment to the Gold Coast government as Assistant Census Commissioner. He predicted that unless the import cuts were rescinded, or fiscal measures taken to reduce consumer demand, the tensions in the winter of 1948 would be so acute as to bring about civil disturbance. For saying this publicly he was dismissed from his post and indeed virtually deported. His predictions were fulfilled to the letter.

[11] The principal events which we have summarised here can be found in published documents, though some of these are not easily available outside West Africa. (For instance, the Sachs Report, which was published in the Gold Coast, received only a very limited circulation.) It was possible to fill out some of the details from other sources, principally the files of the Colonial Office and the Gold Coast Secretariat, and also from interviews with Civil Servants and the leading merchant firms.

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The great increase in the prizes of political power has been a major factor in the frequency and intensity of political conflict in contemporary Africa, and in the rest of the Third World. Extensive politicisation sets up centrifugal forces, a result predictable and evident in multiracial and multitribal societies. These then have to be suppressed, by armed force, by the rulers who wish to exercise power over the largest possible areas. The Nigerian civil war of 1967–69 presents an example of these sequences.[12]

African tribal and cultural diversity was not created by the colonial powers. It was largely a legacy of the long period of isolation of small backward societies, the poverty of communications, and the lack of public security in pre-colonial Africa. The limited government of the period before the 1930s restrained the centrifugal forces; the policies initiated in the late colonial period helped to unleash them.

The departing colonial governments and their successors had agreed that the colonial boundaries should be the frontiers of the independent countries. This suited the African politicians, who did not wish to surrender any part of the country which they were about to take over. The political and financial benefits which accrued to rulers and administrators from the operation of economic controls reinforced this predilection. And since the rulers of the individual states were reluctant to relinquish any part of their power, the controls have also inhibited economic cooperation. Hence the hollowness of high-sounding African organisations which serve little purpose beyond seeking to impress the West and providing jobs, publicity, and perquisites for African politicians and civil servants.

Despotism and corruption do not inhere in the nature of African cultures, or in the African character, but they are now rife in what was once British colonial Africa, notably in West Africa. This is rarely stated publicly, but it is evident and familiar to those who know the scene. Although many traditional African societies had leaders who acted capriciously, they often governed rather lightly and with the voluntary consent of their subjects. And commercial relations informed by mutual confidence have long been commonplace between Africans themselves, and between European merchants and their African customers and suppliers. It was British policy in the closing years of colonialism that contributed greatly to the creation of a new political climate in which despotism was likely to emerge and corruption bound to flourish.

[12] It is often thought that the attempted secession of Biafra from Nigeria was prompted by the prospects of large oil revenues. However, the extensive politicisation of economic life in Nigeria, the resulting political tension, the killings of Ibo in the north, and the demands for secession all antedated the prospects of large oil revenues.

I Left the Body

I left the body where I thought you'd find it,
next to your patio, cracks of blood flashing between
the crazy paving stones. I'm still waiting.

When will you notice it? I know you're busy
what with relatives coming to stay tonight,
but you ought to have come across it by now.

I do understand: it's my obsession, not yours;
the centre-piece of my life, on the edge of yours.
You're not expecting to find it—and so you don't.

But the flowers aren't thick on that side. By eight
it's in full sun. That's why you decided, of course,
to build the patio there—why I chose it, too.

Not that I see the house or garden or flowers,
only the body, gigantic, still, like a sphinx
gushing blood and screaming, screaming, screaming.

At nine o'clock you shook a tablecloth on the lawn.
At ten-fifteen you emptied a vase on the border.
You smoked a cigarette on the kitchen steps at one.

It's a terrible strain waiting here red-handed.
Must I leave the head as well, and the arms and legs,
before you'll recognise somebody's dead?

Cal Clothier

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THEOLOGY

Dan Jacobson's Reading of the Bible

Characters, Events, Stories—By HYAM MACCOBY

A CIVILISATION, including its rise, success and eventual decline, is summed up and encapsulated in the story it tells itself at its inception, i.e., its basic myth. This is not to deny the influence of more mundane forces, such as economic need, political pressure, class conflict, or desire for loot or power. But these never produce any great, lasting, historic configurations unless they are moulded by a story of compelling power, giving them direction. In the absence of such a myth, for example, the great triumphs of the Mongols died down into nothing, while the myth-directed conquests of Islam changed the face of the world.

The story that created both Islam and the Western Judaeo-Christian world is that found in the Bible. To think of it as a story rather than a record of facts might seem to reduce it to the level of entertaining fiction, but this is to underestimate the power of the myth-making faculty to shape human history. It is the strength of Dan Jacobson's book on the Bible, *The Story of the Stories*,[1] that, while aiming to take it "as a fiction, as a fantasy, as an imaginative creation", he rarely descends to the merely aesthetic level. He is not concerned to ask us to "appreciate" the Bible as an analogue of Henry James's novels, or even of Shakespeare's plays. The literary values of the Bible all arise for him out of a passionate structuring of reality, past, present and future, in such a way as to create out of stubborn raw matter a continuing human drama constituting a new order.

The essence of the story at the heart of Israelite religion, as Jacobson sees it, is the election of the Israelites to be "the Chosen People of God." The stories of the deliverance from Egypt, the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, the invasion of the Promised Land, and the subsequent tribulations culminating in the Babylonian exile, all receive their explanation and narrative driving force from the conviction that the Israelites had been chosen by God from all the nations of the earth to be his special people or favourites. Nothing was allowed to disprove this conviction; for even when the Israelites suffered defeat and exile, this too was taken as evidence for the special relationship between Israel and God, who was punishing their sins by the hand of other nations, but would eventually bring back a "remnant" to resume the position of theological favourites.

[1] *The Story of the Stories: The Chosen People and its God.* By DAN JACOBSON. Secker & Warburg, £8.95.

Thus, for Jacobson, the basic urge behind the whole Israelite story is a selfish one, the desire to be superior, as a people, to all other peoples. True, he sees that certain moral advantages can accrue from such an ambition. Indeed, Jacobson arrives at the generalisation that lofty moral achievements need such a selfish basis, just as flowers grow out of a dung-heap. Thus the moral advances of Israelite religion, as expressed in the Ten Commandments and in the social criticism of the prophets, are real enough but would they ever have occurred without the substratum of the selfish doctrine of Election? For without some kind of an agreement with God as to the conditions on which He would continue to regard the Israelites as His chosen people, there was always the fear that He would exercise His formidable powers of choice and rejection once more—and this time reject the Israelites (as He had rejected the Canaanites) in favour of some other people. So the Covenant of Sinai (argues Jacobson) is really the safeguard erected by the Israelites for their own favoured position; it was intended to put restraint on their wayward God, rather than on themselves. Meanwhile, however, it amounted to an admirable code of conduct that has been a model for subsequent ethical thought. Similarly, the ethical programme of the prophets, by which they castigated social oppression and acquisitiveness, was (Jacobson believes) at root an attempt to preserve the favoured position of the Chosen People by attributing their military defeats (easily explicable in terms of power politics) to moral failings for which God was punishing them. This meant that, despite all appearances, they were still occupying the centre of the universe, and could hope to gain political dominance too, if their moral failings were corrected.

NOT THAT Jacobson thinks that the doctrine of Election was wholly productive of good in the moral sphere. On the contrary, his view is that from the Israelite massacre of the Canaanites to the Nazi massacre of the Jews, the idea of being an elect people has been productive of intolerance and cruelty. Jacobson, having been brought up in South Africa, writes feelingly about the Boers who regarded themselves as having a God-given mission to subject the African blacks, and who justified their conviction of chosenness by constant reference to the Old Testament. He thinks, then, that the good moral results of the doctrine of election are largely confined to human relations

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within the "chosen people", whoever they may be, but that in relation to people outside the elect, the moral results are, on the whole, bad, being characterised by a desire to dominate and feel superior. Jacobson thus treats the *universalistic* passages of the Hebrew Bible as being of little importance. Their extent, he says, has been exaggerated by Jewish and Christian apologists alike; compared with élitist or "supremacist" passages, they occupy little space. Even the passage that is generally regarded as the apex of universalism—Isaiah's vision of a Messianic Age when the swords would be beaten into ploughshares and the wolf would lie down with the lamb—Jacobson accuses of a "note of Israelite triumphalism", since the prophet declares that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem", when (presumably) he ought to have prophesised that the word of the Lord would go forth equally from Jerusalem and from, say, Wagga-Wagga.

I SUGGEST THAT we need to attempt a deeper understanding than Dan Jacobson achieves of the word "election." A simple but essential distinction is between those who *aspire* to excellence, and those who think that they already have it. The Nazis, for example, were electionists of the latter kind. They claimed to be superior because they belonged to the "Nordic race", which was, they contended, naturally superior. The Israelites, on the other hand (or the Jews, as they came to be called after the disappearance of the Northern tribes and the consequent importance of the main surviving tribe, that of Judah), never based their claim to be a chosen people on any such grounds. They claimed that they had been chosen by God for no merit that they already possessed, but in order that they should attempt to achieve a merit so far attained by no nation in the world. Their historians in the Bible, therefore, are concerned above all with their *failures* to achieve the task for which they had been chosen. They were chosen to do something, not chosen because they already were something. The Nordic racialists, on the other hand, wrote histories of the Nordic race which purported to show how wonderful it had always been, how much braver, more intelligent, and more beautiful than other races. The last thing that enters the minds of Nordic racialist historians is to chronicle failures, shortcomings, inadequacies.

And here we touch upon one of the chief weaknesses of Dan Jacobson's book—a weakness, strangely enough, in the appreciation of the qualities of narrative. For, as far as Jacobson is concerned, the "story of the stories", the Biblical narrative underlying and unifying all the multifarious tales included in the Bible, arises out of one basic premise: that the Israelites believed themselves to be the chosen people of God. He never asks himself the question, "What was the *event* that made them think themselves to be thus chosen?" A narrative is built out of events, not out of beliefs. The huge event in question was the deliverance from Egypt. Everything in the "story of stories" flows from this happening.

The effect of this great, unlooked-for deliverance was to turn the Israelites from a band of slaves into a nation. The chief emotion aroused by such a deliverance is not one of self-congratulation, but of *thankfulness*. Throughout the Hebrew Bible this note of thankfulness is struck. It is the fact that Judaism began with a huge slice of good luck that has made it the most optimistic of all religions. Its inception is an outburst of joy in new-found freedom. "The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs" . . . "I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you go upright." Jacobson's characterisation of Israelite religion as neurotic, gloomy, and anxious takes no account of this initial joy and its repercussions in all subsequent manifestations of Judaism.

JACOBSON'S THEORY that the *Torah*, or Covenant, was intended to bind the arbitrary God to his chosen people is entirely inadequate to the momentousness of what can be called the Israelite Revolution. Despite his praiseworthy attempt to see the Bible in terms of drama or story, Jacobson has missed its most dramatic feature, the unprecedented decision of a group of escaped slaves to set up their own commonwealth on principles entirely opposed to those of their previous masters and oppressors, and indeed to those of all the established societies of their era. Dramatically speaking, the chief stimulus in this adventure story is the exhilaration of making an entirely new start. This euphoria manifests itself in the determination to carve out a territory within which the new principles will be put into practice, where the erstwhile slaves will all be freemen, and the difficult attempt will be made to avoid a mere repetition of previous social orders.[2] To this end, a clean sweep is made of the pantheon of previous gods, those old deities who, with their heavenly bureaucracy and aristocracy, echoed and validated the bureaucracy and aristocracy of the closed societies of Egypt and Babylonia, heavy with age and stasis. The new idea of the One God makes all possibilities open; for instead of trying to build society on the analogy of the regular cycle of the seasons, with continually repeated phrases of life and death, the new religion postulates a God who transcends all natural cyclical processes, and who acts only in accordance with his untrammelled will. Nothing is given, nothing prescribed by inexorable nature. Jacobson does take note of the newness of this conception of deity, but sees the freely-willing God in negative terms only, as capricious and arbitrary. Because God chose the Israelites so arbitrarily (and Jacobson sees that the Bible makes no claim to any *merit* on the part of the Israelites by which they were chosen), this is taken as an expression of whim rather than of grace. Yet the real positive value of this new conception of deity is that it expresses also a new conception of humanity. For the idea of God, freely creating and destroying universes, gives licence to human beings too to be creators and destroyers—to destroy a corrupt society and build a new one; to take over the mastery of nature instead of seeking, by some sympathetic magic, to conform slavishly to its processes.

[2] The Israelites' determination to discover a land in order to put their new conception of society into effect is itself the source of an inexhaustible stream of political, social, and moral ideas (e.g. the system of land distribution, with its institutions of the Seventh Year and the Jubilee). This was, clearly, no other-worldly religion, in which obedience to the rich and powerful in this world was to be compensated for by rewards in the next.

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THERE WAS no inevitability about the Israelites' reaction to liberation. They could have simply rejoiced in their freedom by going on a mindless rampage of looting and revenge, like the army of Spartacus—another army of escaped slaves—which shook the power of Rome to its foundations, but accomplished nothing positive, morally or politically. Or they could have taken over an area of territory, whether Palestine or some other region, and set up a régime with all the accepted paraphernalia of gods, heroes, and aristocrats, headed by a divine king, and aped the Egypt from which they had escaped. That they did not do this, but instead, under the leadership of Moses, set out on the Utopian career which eventually changed the world, was due to the fact that they wanted to make some sense of what had happened to them. They were motivated, if you like, by a narrative ambition which was unwilling to allow such a good story to tail off into inconclusiveness. But to do this implied that they had been marked out for a special purpose; that they were chosen creatures.

But can one take such a lofty view of the religion of the Old Testament in view of the chief scandal of that religion, the massacre of the Canaanites? It is certainly necessary to face this problem squarely, as Jacobson tries to do. We are concerned, as Jacobson quite fairly remarks, not with the historical facts (which are hard to ascertain) but with the myth, i.e. the story that shaped the Israelite religious consciousness—and that story contains at the start an element of shocking violence. Does not this contrast very unfavourably with the pacifism of the New Testament, with its gentle injunctions to "*turn the other cheek*" and "*resist not evil*"?[3]

One might indeed be inclined to say that a religion whose foundation-myth begins so violently must be imbued with violence, and one would expect it to crop up constantly in its history. (Such a charge has been made against Judaism by those who, for example, saw in Menachem Begin's campaign against the PLO in Lebanon a recurrence of the Israelite assault against the Canaanites.) Moreover, violence exercised by groups outside the Jewish people has often been laid at the door of the Hebrew Bible and its anti-Canaanite myth. For example, the Boers in their subjection of the African blacks, or the Christian armies of Europe which all but annihilated the civilisations of the Americas, saw themselves, to some extent, in the image of the Israelites invading the Promised Land.

Worse still, the annihilation of the Canaanites has been taken by many writers (including Dan Jacobson) as indistinguisable morally from Hitler's attempt to annihilate the Jews. Indeed, the two things have been thought to be causally connected. It was "the Israelite example" (it is alleged) of religious fanaticism and cruelty that has reverberated through world history owing to the influence of the Old Testament in Christianity. Whenever the New Testament message of love has been forgotten and the Old Testament message of intolerant hate has gained the upper hand, there have been explosions of violence, from the Spanish Inquisition and the massacre of the Albigensians to the Nazi holocaust of the Jews (whose suffering was thus a case of being hoist with their own petard).

THIS PICTURE, however (though it is so widely accepted as to be taken for granted), is in my view a complete travesty. Even if the Israelite assault on the Canaanites is given the worst interpretation possible, as an attempt at extermination, there can be, I am convinced, no real comparison with the Nazi genocide of the Jews. The position of the Israelites was one of a desperate fight for life and territory in the face of terrible odds. A band of escaped slaves had the whole world against them, because such an escape struck at the root of all established slave societies; the invasion of Canaan was not just a political conflict, it was a class conflict of the bitterest kind. If the Israelites, carving out a place for the underdogs of the ancient world, had to fight without quarter against the powerful, heavily-armed Canaanites with their "chariots of iron" and their "cities fortified up to heaven", this was only to be expected; and the French and Russian Revolutions were picnics compared with this. What sort of fate awaited the Israelites if they failed? We can gauge this from the outcome of the only similar event of which we have record: the rebellion of Spartacus and his band of slave-gladiators against the Roman Empire, after which thousands upon thousands of defeated rebels were crucified.

Merely to win a partial victory was not enough for the Israelites; for it was a spiritual (ideological, if you will) necessity not to compromise with the old order and not to set up a society which would quickly revert to ancient patterns. Thus the usual truces and alliances, by which invading tribes got for themselves (or rather for their chiefs) a slice of the establishment cake, were not open to the Israelites, with their vision of equality under the One God. The result (given the determination of the old order to hold on to its gains) was bound to be a bloody slaughter, but one that might be vindicated by the setting up of a new society giving hope for the future of mankind, since it heralded the overthrow of slave-states everywhere.

What is similar here to the Nazi massacre of the Jews? Nothing. That was no desperate encounter against heavy odds, but the cold-blooded extermination of helpless, unarmed civilians. The motivation for this senseless slaughter was an insane theory of racialism according to which the victims were not even accorded human status. And the aim was to set up a "New Order" in which human liberty would be extinguished in the name of idolatry of a *Führer* and of a master race. The Jewish doctrine of election, of the "chosen people", has nothing at all in common with this doctrine of racialism. The Jewish people claimed no racial superiority to other peoples; and so far from priding themselves on being a race of gods, they proclaimed their lowly origin as the descendants of slaves. To confuse the Jewish idea of election with racialism is unthinking; yet it is a commonplace among writers on the subject, and has infected even the writings of Jewish authors such as George Steiner and Dan Jacobson.

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[3] In actual fact, the element of violence in the Christian foundation-myth is substantial. The violence suffered by Christ on the Cross is horrifying enough, but it is only a substitute or token for the massacre, projected by God the Father, of the entire human race, which is still under sentence of hellish death unless it partakes in Christ's sufferings. Compared with such images and calculations of universal violence, the local sufferings of the Canaanites surely appear to be small-scale.

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AGAIN, ASSUMING THE WORST possible picture of the Israelite assault on the Canaanites (i.e. that the Israelites, either in fact or in myth, wiped out the Canaanite tribes), there is a wide difference between this and the Christian conquests of the Americas or of Africa to which Jacobson and very many others have likened it. The difference is that the Israelites (unlike Islam and Christianity) did not proclaim any holy war against the whole of humanity in the name of their new religion. Their war was against the Canaanites alone (and against those, like the Midianites and the Amalekites, who tried to prevent them from reaching the Promised Land). And this was not because the Canaanites were considered more wicked than other peoples, but simply because they happened to occupy the land which, as the Israelites happened to believe, had been chosen by God for their own new experiment in living. The assault against the Canaanites, therefore, did not imply any further such assaults against other nations in subsequent Jewish history, and in fact there was never again such an all-out total assault, though the Jews were engaged from time to time, like other peoples, in ordinary wars. It is in the subsequent history of Christianity and Islam that we must look for the concept of religious war against the whole world. When Christians, for example, sought to justify their ruthless conquest of the Americas by referring to the Old Testament (as they often did), this was confusion of thought. How could the conquest of a "Promised Land" by a landless, outcast, refugee people be a justification for an imperial nation with a homeland of its own to attack other peoples with the declared aim of offering them a choice between death and salvation?[4]

Further, the analogy that has been drawn between the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites and the present-day conflict between Jews and Arabs is entirely erroneous. Even from a rigidly orthodox religious standpoint, there can be no equation of Muslims (practising a monotheistic religion based on Judaism) with Canaanites (practising a religion involving human sacrifice and temple prostitution).

Modern religious Zionism contains no theme of clearing the Land from the pollution of idolatry. And from the standpoint of the vast majority of Zionists, for whom Israel is a modern, secular, democratic state, such a theme is even more remote. The "attachment to the Land" is one of history, sentiment, and even of political expediency, considerations that can be easily reconciled with territorial concessions and compromises, and imply no policy of hostility towards the Arabs, let alone a policy of extermination.

I HAVE CONDUCTED the above argument on the assumption that the assault of the Israelites on the Canaanites did amount to a programme of extermination. This, however, is by no means the case. The passages which are always cited to this effect (and are cited once more by Dan Jacobson) come from one stratum only of the Hebrew Bible, the writings of the "Deuteronomic school", especially *Deuteronomy* itself and the *Book of Joshua*. These writers lived about 600 years after the conquest of the Canaanites, and were engaged in a bitter battle against the attempt of King Menasseh to nullify monotheism and introduce polytheistic worship into the Temple.

As part of their anti-polytheistic propaganda, the Deuteronomic writers created the myth that the Canaanites, many centuries before, had been made subject to a mandate of extermination. Even these writers, however, had to admit that many exceptions were made to this mandate. The famous Canaanite harlot, Rahab, for example, was spared together with her whole family for the help she gave to the Israelite spies; whole Canaanite tribes (the Gibeonites, the Kenites, and others) were spared for various reasons, while many other tribes were simply not conquered at all. In the accounts given in *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, and *Numbers*, written long before the Deuteronomic writings, no mandate of extermination is found. The Israelites are commanded to "drive out" or "disinherit" the Canaanites, not to exterminate them; a prophecy is given that God would send the "hornet" to drive away the Canaanites. It is also implied at various points that Canaanites would be allowed to stay if they adopted the Israelite religion (this was actually done by the Kenites).

Jacobson points out, in this connection, quite correctly, that we ought to be concerned not with the historical facts but with the myth, which sets the tone for the religious civilisation built on it. But if this is so, we must take into account not only the written text of the Bible, much less the written text of one stratum of it, but also the traditions accompanying the text. The influence of the alleged myth of the extermination of the Canaanites would exert itself in practice in the way the Biblical text was explained and interpreted in oral teaching. This oral tradition of interpretation is found in the rabbinic writings; and when we examine these, we find that no mandate of extermination of the Canaanites was taught. The rabbis realised that there was some contradiction between the more bloodthirsty passages of *Deuteronomy* and *Joshua* and the earlier accounts; they therefore attempted to harmonise the conflicting passages; and the net result was the view (found in the *Midrash*) that annihilation was only the last resort. The Canaanites were to be given the choice of conversion to Judaism or leaving the country; only if they rejected both choices were they to be annihilated. This is the myth that featured in actual Jewish teaching, and it must be remembered that it applied to the Canaanites only; no such grim choice was to be offered to nations not occupying the Promised Land, since their practice of idolatry would not affect the Israelite experiment.

The obliteration of the Canaanites, by conversion, expulsion or physical annihilation, was thus rationalised and justified in Israelite thinking by the revolutionary character of Israelite religion, for the implementation of which the Promised Land had been designated by God. Much turns, therefore, on whether the monotheistic revolution was actually a great advance in human development. If it was, we might well be disposed to condone the bloodshed inevitable in every such attempt to wipe the slate clean and begin human society again.

[4] The Boers also attempted to justify the subjugation of the African blacks by reference to the Old Testament story of the curse of Ham. This is an outlandish example of the misreading and misuse of the Old Testament. The Canaanites were included in the curse of Ham, but they were white. The Ethiopians were the only black nation descended from Ham (through his son, Cush) but they were *not* included in Noah's curse, and are regarded with respect throughout the Hebrew Bible, *which contains no colour prejudice*.

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If, however, we conclude (as Jacobson does) that Israelite monotheism was merely a form of Israelite self-aggrandisement, we must regard the Israelite invasion as merely another in the endless, meaningless series of invasions of the "haves" by the "have-nots." Every historical nation has begun with some such violence, but has not, in the same way as the Israelites, sought to surround this violence with such a plethora of justificatory myths. Was this procedure of the Israelites a measure of their conceit, or of the genuine newness and importance of their ideals?

FOR MY OWN PART, I hold it necessary, therefore, to assert unequivocally the radical nature of the Israelite religious outlook. At the centre of the Hebrew Bible is a message of universalistic humanism. Jacobson denies this, saying that the expressions of universalism are few and ambiguous. Here again Jacobson fails to apply his own programme, which is to respond to the *story*, not to the explicit propaganda statements. "Do not trust the story-teller, trust the tale." The Bible, after all, begins with a memorable expression of universalism, not in the form of a manifesto but of a myth. The One God creates the whole universe and then creates the first man, Adam, into whom He breathes His own divine life. As opposed to the later Christian idea of the Incarnation of one man, Jesus, we have here the idea that the whole human race is the Incarnation of God. The name "*Adam*" means in Hebrew "*man*." There are no Jews in this early part of the story. (This may seem obvious, but there are many, I find, who are surprised to be told that Adam, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, et al. were *not* Jews.) Man, we are instructed, was "created in the image of God"; man, not the Jews. The universalist humanism of the story becomes even more striking when we compare it with the Babylonian creation myth, wherein an evil, rebellious god is sliced up to form the human race, who must henceforth live a life of expiation and service to the victorious gods. In contrast, the God of the Bible freely creates man and endows him with power over nature. It should be noted too that the Christian myth of Original Sin, by which man becomes a lost creature after the Fall, is no part of the Hebrew story, which regards the Fall as having an heroic aspect, giving man the "knowledge of good and evil", though costing him the childhood paradise of Eden.

The early pre-Jewish patriarchs are represented as monotheists; so that Judaism, when it finally arrives on the scene, is regarded as a recovery of the original religion of mankind. In the manner of all Utopian revolutionaries, the Jews considered themselves to be reverting to the primal innocence of mankind before it was corrupted by greed and oppression. This character of the Hebrew story was well understood by later revolutionaries, who sang, "*When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?*" Monotheism itself is not the worship of an Oriental despot (as Jacobson, following certain clichés, represents), but is the expression of the dignity and unity of the human race, each member of which has, like Adam, a direct link to the primal reality of God, without need of intermediaries in the form of god-descended élites.

I find nothing clearer than that, again and again, the Biblical story drives home this message of universalism in *narrative* terms. Thus, immediately after Abraham is chosen as the founder of the Israelite nation, we find him pleading with God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, the inhabitants of which (again, to stress the obvious) were *not* Israelites. No better way could be found to show what Abraham has been chosen *for*. Jacobson ignores this story. He also ignores the *Book of Ruth*, which depicts Ruth as a Moabite convert to Judaism and the ancestress of King David and his messianic dynasty. He neglects too the *Book of Job*, which, in dealing with the basic confrontation of man and evil, strips away all Jewish colouring from the story and depicts the central character (Job) as a *non*-Jewish sage. He also overlooks the *Book of Jonah*, which depicts Jonah as a Jewish prophet who is punished for his reluctance to deliver a divine message to a non-Hebrew city (Nineveh).

I stress all this because it is this universalism which explains the sense of new and startling insight that made the Israelites, under Moses, feel that they were in the vanguard of human progress and therefore unlike any other people on earth. This conviction was the outcome of events, rather than of cogitation; it arose from the fact of their deliverance, which all the mighty traditional gods of ancient established society had been unable to prevent. The God of the new order had caused all previous gods to fall to dust. The alleged Jewish exclusivism is, accordingly, the sense of uniqueness of being the sole bearers of the seeds of the future. The vision of a future world was so unlike anything then existing that the vital task was not to "win over the world" to it (an almost impossible conversion for those who had not had the unique exhilarating experience which made the Israelites into a nation), but to preserve it from being lost. More than this, the Israelites were too unsure about being able to live up to the vision themselves to set about prematurely communicating it to others. At the same time, the door was open to any non-Jew to enter the Jewish people by conversion. Such figures—from Jethro (the father-in-law of Moses) to Ruth and Obadiah (the convert prophet, as Jewish tradition held him to be)—appear like a thread in the Bible story. Finally, as an echo of the myth of a Golden Age in the antediluvian past—when all mankind worshipped the One God, before the appearance of polytheism and its enslavement, and before a Chosen People became necessary to stand alone against the tide of idolatry—there was a vision of a distant future: when all mankind would again be won to the true worship, and the Jewish people, in recognition of their long immemorial fight against delusion, would be given special honour as the priest-nation of the world. Such an aspiration is dishonoured by the name of "supremacism."

THIS IS a species of universalism which, in my view, contrasts favourably with the imperial universalism that later arose in Christianity, when the Church aspired to swallow up the whole of humanity, condemning all outside herself to eternal damnation, and recognising no other valid worship of God, Judaism, recognising both in the remote past and in the remote future valid forms of monotheism other than its own embattled ark, offered a universal faith, but not a universal church. The *Torah*, the Jewish covenant with God, was *not* regarded as the only possible mode of monotheism. The concept of a *ius*

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gentium ("the Seven Laws of the Sons of Noah") was developed as a basis for other such covenants. Special rules of the *Torah* (such as the laws of forbidden foods, of the Sabbath and festivals and of ritual purity) were *not* regarded as of universal validity, but as having been undertaken by a covenant of the Jewish people alone. A non-Jew, for example, who ate pork or did not keep the Sabbath was regarded as guilty of no sin whatever, whereas other laws, such as that against murder, were of universal validity, and had to form part of any version of monotheism.

WHAT KIND OF God, then, is presupposed by this universalist yet pluralist monotheism? Dan Jacobson begins his book by saying that he proposes to treat God as a character in fiction. This is a very interesting and valuable undertaking; but it is, alas, carried out with only a moderate degree of success. God is a rather more interesting character than Jacobson realises. For Jacobson, with his concept of *peripeteia*, does not see God as radically different from the gods whom He supplanted. All that Jacobson has done is to substitute a manic-depressive God for a cyclical Fate or a Wheel of Fortune that goes round-and-round, up-and-down. It was a commonplace of pagan thought that what goes up must come down; even the gods are subject to this law, which is an impersonal one, above all strivings and emotions of gods or men.

But the Biblical God is, above all, personal. He has purposes which He wills; He acts, and is not merely swayed by alternate moods. He is higher than all fates. There is nothing either above Him or within Him to which He must bow, as Zeus and the Olympians must bow to inexorable Ananke. If the Bible says, "*How are the mighty fallen!*"—or that the mountains will be made low, and low places made high—this is not a law of "nature", but an expression of determination and strong purpose. It is an assertion that nothing in the world can pride itself on its permanence, or even on its consonance with eternal rhythms of change (the aim of pagan religion), but the radically new is always possible, for "*I will make a new thing.*" As against the shifting phenomena of nature, God is permanent, which means that His chosen purposes surmount the tide of change, that His will is freely self-directed towards its creative ends. Permanence, or transcendence, is a quality not of apparently static unchanging objects like rocks (for every rock eventually crumbles) but of the creative, dynamic life-force.

God, then, as a character in fiction, is essentially *free*. The attempt to portray a free character (as every novelist or dramatist knows) is full of difficulties, since the very concept of freedom contains puzzling antinomies. A completely free character has to be omnipotent, i.e. free to act in any way he wants. Yet to pursue every passing whim is not freedom but its very opposite. Moreover, a truly free person must be free to change his mind, or even to limit his own freedom in certain areas—otherwise, he is only an abstract principle, the least free of all existences.

Is the God of the Bible afraid of these contradictions? Evidently not. He is omnipotent, but can be persuaded to change His mind. His chief self-imposed limitation of His own freedom is His creation of man, an autonomous creature in whom He has implanted not only an ability to disobey Him but, even more interestingly, an ability to influence Him and even instruct Him. When Abraham has the courage to upbraid God, saying, "*Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice?*", he is the precursor of all those Jews who have rebuked and hectored God throughout history, reminding Him that their relation to Him is one of contract and covenant, not of tyrant and subject.

Perhaps the most picturesque example of this is the Talmudic story of how God was once declared out of order by a council of rabbis, when He attempted to influence their deliberations by a heavenly voice. Upon which God laughed, and said, "*My children have defeated me!*" This story was declared blasphemous in the medieval trial of the Talmud by Christians at Paris. After this an attempt was made to burn all copies of the Talmud; and indeed, the story is quite incompatible with Christian conceptions of God. Anyone who wants to write a character-sketch of the God of the Hebrew Bible, as Dan Jacobson has aspired to do, must understand that such a portrayal must distinguish sharply between the Jewish God and the Christian Father-God, a different character altogether, having something of the cold Greek cruelty of the Aristotelian First Cause, on which He was modelled. Only an abstract philosophical principle could be so cruel as to condemn all mankind to eternal torture because of the sin of one man, Adam. The Jewish God is not cold, though He can be dangerous, being a centre of infinite energy. He is demanding, but only because He respects human status sufficiently to regard human beings as responsible creatures; He expects them to develop into adulthood, and not to rely continually on His support, or on His forgiveness. He is a law-giver, but also an artist and creator, revelling in His power, and "sporting with Leviathan." Is this not the kind of combination of qualities that He evidently wants and expects from mankind?

I offer this brief sketch which is, I believe, truer to the character of God as portrayed in the stories of the Hebrew Bible than the diminutive, vacillating being derived therefrom by Dan Jacobson. In the New Testament, as I have been arguing, the character of God is very different indeed. Nietzsche deplored the practice of printing the Old Testament and the New Testament between the same covers, since he regarded the Old Testament as immeasurably the greater work. With this judgment I happen to agree. Jacobson's chapter on the New Testament is the best in his book, for, setting out at first to treat it, in the conventional way, as a natural continuation of the Old Testament, he is forced to the conclusion that it embodies quite a different myth. Dan Jacobson has at least made a beginning at a serious attempt to consider the Hebrew Bible as one of the greatest formative myths of mankind.

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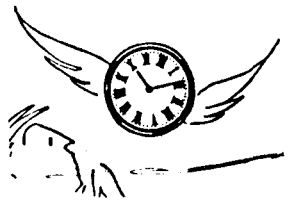
INTERVIEW

Of Generations, Young & Old

Manès Sperber Looks Back—By LEONHARD REINISCH



YOU WERE BORN IN *1905, and many of your friends throughout Europe—Arthur Koestler in London, André Malraux and Raymond Aron in Paris, Ignazio Silone in Rome—shared the same "Jahrgang" and the same catastrophic Europe of the 20th century. I'd like to ask you about the experiences of your generation.*

SPERBER: None of us belongs solely to his own generation, for the essential influences are always twofold. Part of us belongs to the previous generation, when our parents were young; only the second part of ourselves belongs to the generation in which we were young and growing up.

—Then what do you think are the formative influences of home and early schooling?

SPERBER: If I go back to the time of the First World War (and, living in Vienna, I was, so to speak, on the side of the Central Powers), we who were interested in psychology, sociology, analysis, came to the conclusion that after this terrible lingering ordeal of death and blood, the family could not maintain its integrity. Since then I have corrected and adjusted my views of the problem in various books and essays. Do you remember that cry of a famous French writer? "O families, how hateful you are! . . ." In a way, that was characteristic of a whole generation, but I think the feeling is no longer relevant. I live in France, and I rather think the young Frenchmen of today would not subscribe to André Gide's old battle-cry.

—But when the literary critic Willy Haas (who also belonged to your generation) returned to Munich from London where as an anti-Nazi he had been in exile, he said sharply to the German students: "We must first teach you to hate your fathers—at the moment, you're not even capable of that! . . ."

SPERBER: As I see it, the family has a dual and contradictory role in human and social affairs. On the one hand, it offers an example of authority, and so in a sense prepares the way for the future civic subject, the pliable and obedient citizen—the *Untertan* (in Heinrich Mann's famous novel), if you will. Against that paternal authority, on the other hand, it offers the possibility of maternal defence, and, in the end, the chance of personal liberation. In the final analysis, maturity is achieved not when the father is killed (to use Freud's image), but when one becomes the father oneself.

—Just the other day, in the streets near your Paris flat, I ran into a host of demonstrating students. Maybe it's the time of year for marching down boulevards. . . . There were thousands there fifteen years ago, too, though different ones—and I recall Ignazio Silone saying in visible anger and exasperation, "These stupid bourgeois students, these sonny-boys! . . ." Another Italian writer, Pasolini, felt like that too, and declared himself on the side of the "proletarian police" (who came from the poor working classes) rather than the pampered children of the well-to-do.

THE PRESENTATION **of a "Peace Prize" to** MANES SPERBER **at the last Frankfurt International Book Fair was not a very peaceable occasion. Sperber may well have revised some of his views over a lifetime of political and intellectual passions—he was born on the Eastern fringe of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1905 and for the past 40 years has lived in Paris—but his stormy temperament remains unchanged. He was not content to express a few conventional pieties on the subject of War and Peace.**

QUITE A FEW PROTESTS *resulted. Bernd Engelmann, head of the Left-wing Writers Union, was dismayed by Sperber's heretical views and demanded that the prize be returned forthwith. A hundred editorials were written on the subject: Should the trade union of the literati have the last word in deciding which viewpoints were to be awarded prizes and which were not? Among others, Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll (although active "peace fighters") defended Sperber's right to speak and demanded Engelmann's resignation. Under pressure "the arogant little censor" (as the FAZ called him) finally resigned. As in his novels, essays, and not least his memorable autobiographical volumes, Sperber was again at the heart of a European controversy. He was too ill to come to Frankfurt or there might, indeed, have been further fireworks. (His acceptance speech was read at the prize-giving by Professor Alfred Grosser, in quiet and well-mannered tones.)*

The only pity is that Sperber's works are not better known in the English-speaking world. One of his books, "Achilles Heel", was published by André Deutsch in 1959; and Constantine FitzGibbon used to translate his articles and essays for various periodicals. At the age of 78 he has become one of the last and most powerful voices of his generation (among his friends, Koestler and Aron are recently dead, Silone and Malraux still mourned). It is time, surely, for Anglo-American publishers to pay attention, if belatedly, to the impressive body of Sperber's work—which fulfils his own best ideals as an "old teacher" for "young generations."

M.J.L.

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SPERBER: You can't get round the fact that modern youth has been searching for any form of escape from the shackles of the older generation; but, as they discover, it is simply not possible. Dependence in material and other ways is just too strong. And the result is that they cry out for both the privileges of adulthood and the security of childhood—a demand that is quite unfulfillable. If there is to be liberation, it must be more than a revolt against the family. Of course, rebellion is part of the maturing phase, but there's a difference between being a rebel and being a revolutionary—and I'm not speaking in any narrow political sense. Rebellion is opposition to something; revolution at its ideal best implies not only being against what is old, but also the hope, at least, of creating something new and different and satisfactory.

—But, speaking politically, and irrespective of whether they came from Left or Right, the rebellions of '68 and now of '83 were precisely that.

SPERBER: What we experienced in the 1960s and early '70s I thought of not as a Restoration but as a Rejuvenation Comedy. Do you remember the fun when oldsters felt they were young again, when they marched and carried banners and were romantic enthusiasts? They were enjoying a second adolescence. I suppose that never before in all of world history have we seen quite the same phenomenon. The old began to wear the clothes of the young, so that whereas in the past young girls had dreamed of eventually being able to dress like their elders, suddenly we saw mothers and even grandmothers trying to look like their children, their grandchildren. I've tried to understand this, and my view is that the central experience of our century has not been "a crisis of youth" at all, but the tragic experience of the older generations, the grown-ups, who found themselves in the wrong—having done wrong, having been wronged.

—Do you agree with Alexander Mitscherlich's analysis—that there is today a "fatherless society" . . . "eine Vaterlose Gesellschaft", at least as far as the ruined Continental post-War societies are concerned?

SPERBER: It's an important point. During the War, we children of this century saw women taking responsibility in almost every area of society, because the men were no longer there. Mitscherlich feels there is a special German aspect to this, and that German children grew up with a certain disrespect for their fathers, those failed authoritarians—less so for their mothers. After the Third Reich collapsed in rubble, children saw their fathers as representing the horrific world which went under with Hitler. And I would add here my own feeling that after World War II, German parents, mothers and fathers alike, were totally disillusioned with themselves. They felt they had done nothing to prevent the War, that instead of resisting it they had collaborated with evil and therefore were partly responsible for it. They felt that their children, who after all were guilty of nothing, had more chance of seeing things clearly, getting things right, doing some real good. Such a society had indeed become "fatherless" in the sense of the many men killed in the war, and the many more who had participated in an evil tragedy, and were overwhelmed by self-doubt and hesitation.

HOW DID THIS DEVELOP into the new theories and practices of so-called "anti-authoritarian education"? This has evidently led to rapid participation in political life, especially now that young students no longer depend on their parents for their education but try to profile themselves as in revolt against family and school, eventually finding themselves in confrontation with a government and state.

SPERBER: Let me talk about the West German problem, where these elements are most pronounced. The *Bundesrepublik* constitutes a very free and open society—in my view (as against myopic critics both in Germany and elsewhere) one of the freest lands in the world. The youth of the last generation or two do in fact stand in a very juvenile, even childish relationship to the governmental institutions of civil society. They demand everything from the state: food, warmth, agreeable work to do when they look for jobs, security in later pensionable years, etc, and at the same time they proclaim that they want to overthrow this state, or wish it to disappear in some other way. Now this, it seems clear to me, has more to do with rebellion in the personal sphere of life than with real political rebellion. What's needed is to make it clear to them, convince them, that the foundations of the state must have the same basis as a good family, namely a shared feeling of community. In both cases, after all, there are goals and objectives which are recognised by a majority as corresponding with their own desires.

At the risk of being very polemical, I want to go even further. What is happening in Germany today, with its so-called "Alternative" movements, all acting in the name of liberation (and, perhaps, also a kind of liberty that borders on licence), is really something for which the dictatorship of the 1930s paved the way. An appeal is being made to "the masses" to oppose a state whose governmental leadership was fairly elected, whose freely constituted majority comprises openly registered voters casting secret ballots—what is this but an attempt to replace that which we know as democracy with an ochlocracy, mob rule? In the name of passing emotions and passions, élites are arrogating to themselves the right to dictate, the authority to make choices for all.

—Aren't you thereby raising the whole question of the course of democracy ever since the French Revolution? Can the old traditional forms of a democratic party system prove viable in these days of catastrophic nuclear dangers? Hasn't the old system of political parties itself taken on undemocratic oligarchic forms?

SPERBER: I'd rather, at this point, develop the connections between the family and political society, between the young with their new life-style and the emergence of new emotional and political expectations. You remember that old adage, "If you want to command you must first learn to obey." And of course this was always the motto of the authoritarians. In effect it was a message that no one lives forever, no one remains young; soon the time will come when you will move up the ladder and then you too will command. Throughout history this argument has always had a tremendously persuasive power.

What has been happening in recent years has at its roots a grave misunderstanding, which has had disorienting and harmful effects. My old teacher and master, Alfred Adler—the founder of so-called comparative individual psychology—used

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to argue that with certain spiritual neuroses the experience of more or less strong authoritarian controls in the course of childhood resulted in an incapacity in later life, an inability to deal with special problems which inevitably crop up. And in this perspective he tried to develop a number of principles which would ease an effective transition from authoritarian to *un*-authoritarian relationships within the family and in school. I want to underscore, particularly in the light of what went on in the '60s and '70s, the difference between *un*-authoritarian and *anti*-authoritarian. The former quality, in, say, a teacher, denotes not an overbearing or arrogant authority, but merely the superiority of greater knowledge. His true authority comes from the fact that he *does* know better, he *does* know more—because he has studied and learned; and not because he is in charge of the class. The so-called anti-authoritarian educators, as we see so sadly on all sides, felt it right to reject the whole idea of teaching, and everywhere, even in the kindergarten, inculcated a definite hostility to knowledge. In effect this became a celebration of innocent ignorance, perhaps playful and joyful, but in the end mindless. For the anti-authoritarians were convinced that there is simply nobody who can actually *teach* us.

WHAT CONSEQUENCES DO YOU DRAW *from this for the politics of the various youth movements we've been experiencing? Is it a matter of establishing un-authoritarian relationships—voters and their democratic states linked by a sense of community, unauthoritarian interpersonal bonds among the citizens?*

SPERBER: That much is absolutely clear, but I think it is also important to underline the fact that, representing and protecting as it does the wide variety among its people, it's essentially not in the nature of a parliamentary pluralist society to be "authoritarian." Nevertheless, the youth movements (often headed by the silver-haired) speak out as if only *their* programmes have any humanity, any legitimacy—as if only they can point out the true path ahead. I find this "undemocratic", not only in the sense that it subverts the democratic party system of elections and representatives, but also in the sense of being dictatorial and omniscient. The authoritarian is one who claims he is always in the right, about everything. Given the opportunity (or perhaps merely enough loud-speakers), the authoritarian would allow no voice to be heard but his own. For me, it's our form of Western parliamentary democracy that is unauthoritarian; and on the other side there are the old monarchies or tyrannies, the dictatorships, and any other form of "alternative" which is characterised by a kind of rule-by-monologue. All of us make certain demands upon the state—we want whatever we deem to be unjust to be set right, and we want due process of law. Social order is the framework for protecting and assisting the weak and disadvantaged.

—Nevertheless it may come about that order calls for coercion; and surely the citizen must be concerned when the authorities accrue to themselves more powers than are consistent with democracy?

SPERBER: In the very first French statutes of the modern era there's a phrase about the inalienable rights of man. I wish young demonstrators carried more banners with that inscription. It deserves repeating that the freedom of every individual ends where the freedom of his neighbour begins. What I mean by "order" is the arrangement whereby each of us can enjoy the privileges, advantages, and liberties available in society, and each of us has equal rights and opportunities.

—You've often referred to Jakob Burckhardt, the great Swiss historian, as one of your masters. He used to warn that power in and of itself is evil. In the same way, the Germans like to say that politics is a dirty business ("ein schmutziges Geschäft").

SPERBER: If it is held to be unfailingly a dirty business, then it's evidence of the historical fact that certain peoples came to share in state power at a very late stage in their development. German democracy is a recent arrival, and this is revealed by two words which in the German language always have a sour and negative connotation. One is the word *Kompromiss*. In England, where democracy has its oldest roots, compromise is equivalent to political life. How, otherwise, could two citizens—both decent, intelligent, and loyal to their ideals—ever come to a mutual understanding? What would be the result if each of us, in our social and political transactions, did not concede something and negotiate in the expectation that the other was equally prepared to be accommodating at some point or another? The second word I'd mention is *Konservativ*. . . .

—You're asking, then, for a scrupulous self-examination of ourselves—as rebels, as obedient subjects, as human beings who are concerned not only with politics but also with the private pursuit of happiness. And thank God we don't all have to function as professional politicians, "Politik als Beruf" as Max Weber memorably called it. Aren't there already too many dilettantes involved in our political life?

SPERBER: You know, for centuries anyone capable of begetting a child, anyone who can procreate, has been firmly convinced that this automatically guarantees them the ability to educate the next generation. In the same way, nowadays, we find that everybody who reads newspapers and magazines, listens to discussions of politics and public affairs, drops a vote into a ballot box, becomes a member of a political party, is seized of the conviction that they know all about politics and social institutions, that they are in a position to have expert opinions and have the right to intervene at any time and place in the issues of the day. I wonder. . . . I rather doubt it. Education has certainly proved one of the most difficult tasks for organised society to perform competently and creatively. And a knowledge of politics, that exceedingly complex and sensitive subject, is also relatively rare. The ability to make sound and informed decisions is, alas, more seldom to be found than we would like to believe. In my view, one of the greatest dangers for mankind today—I believe it to be an infinitely greater danger than the "ignorance" which afflicted Socrates' contemporaries—is a prevalent practical know-nothingism. . . .

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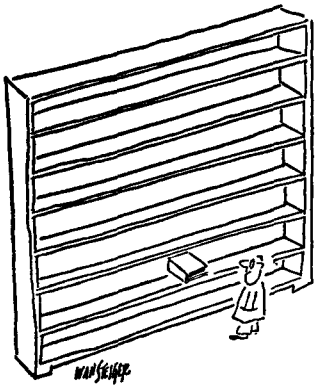
EAST & WEST

Pavel Kohout: A Dissident in Exile



THE THEME OF "KAFKA" *turns up every now and then in the East behind the "cultural curtain" of prohibited classics. Does he have a special meaning for you as a Prague writer?*

KOHOUT: It's absurd that Kafka was and remains a banned author in his own homeland and in his own city: "cut off" even more than when he was alive and felt himself confined to a ghetto. I belong to those who discovered him in the year 1963, the year of the famous Liblice Kafka-conference for which we were all so grateful to Edouard Goldstücker.[1] What seems so strange and even improbable is that there were "Kafkaesque" elements in my own work even before I had read a line of his. This is for me a kind of inner proof that Kafka would not have been possible without Prague, that certain spiritual things appear to be almost "programmed" and there's no getting away from them.

—Why does the official cultural bureaucracy in Prague have such fears about publishing Kafka's works?

KOHOUT: It's not my concern to explain why they are so stupid. But I do believe it has also something to do with an exaggerated sense of the importance and consequences of literature—the anxiety that books and literature can in these days still blow up governments. The last time it happened was long ago in Beaumarchais' time, and the epoch was then ripe for it.

—Are you writing today from the perspective of an exiled Czech author or a Western European?

KOHOUT: I hope I am writing, now as then, out of my own personal perspective. Since I was 16 I have been trying, through literature, to articulate myself, to find a way of comprehending life and the world. I do not have the feeling that the government's withdrawal of my citizenship was something fundamental, drastically altering me as a writer. Of course my involuntary exile is a new experience, and writers let all new experiences happen to them; they pay attention, and try to understand.

[1] See, in ENCOUNTER (May 1964), Hans Mayer and François Bondy, "The Struggle for Kafka & Joyce."

—In a recent article on certain "friends and enemies" you wrote about the "dangerous misunderstandings" which you found reigning among your Western colleagues on the subject of intellectual and artistic problems in Eastern Europe. What is the cause of the conflict?

KOHOUT: I have only one explanation for the attitudes of my friends and colleagues on the European Left. Unconsciously they have the feeling that we are nullifying their dreams of socialism with our critiques of the realities of the socialist countries. But what I criticise in the bureaucratic tyranny in my homeland has very little to do with "socialism." That is what many in the West do not quite comprehend, although they have had every opportunity over the years to compare theory and practice. They betray their own dreams when they, all in the name of *détente* or *Entspannung* or Peace, exclude the persecuted and exiled writers of Central and Eastern Europe from the open forum of public discussion. At the so-called Peace Conferences the only Easterners invited turn out to be the ones who are certain not to be able to come (and everybody knows it), or those whom it would not be too hard for the "official delegation" out of the East to take. Accordingly the Westerners become accomplices of Eastern discrimination.

—What about your own hopes for the future of socialism?

KOHOUT: When I take a look at the world, it would seem that—in the face of the underdevelopment and undernourishment of a great portion of mankind—the idea of socialism or of communism would always find additional sustenance. But, to the cynical power-holders in the so-called socialist camp, these legitimate hopes represent only another opportunity for them cold-bloodedly to exploit crises in the furtherance of their own imperialist interests. Thus, because we live in a world which has, and will continue to have, socialist movements, and there is a world-power which registers and codifies such aspirations, we must always be placing our hopes in reform movements. The alternative would amount to wars of destruction.

For the peoples in "the East" it is not a matter of social theories but of the simple and straightforward problem of how to go on living within their given social systems. For that reason alone I am also prepared to understand the passivity of my own people, although I was never passive myself. They go on telling themselves: there is no chance to resist the Soviet power with force or violence, for whatever can and will happen will always be in accordance with Soviet approval. So long as social developments in the Soviet Union are not at the point of reformation, themselves ripe for change, just so long will things in Central and Eastern Europe be in stagnation. These peoples are making the naked effort to protect their existence and identity. All this is what the West must understand. But when one notes that the Big Bosses of Eastern culture are given glad-hand welcomes in the West, then how can one help feeling depressed and hopeless?

—After your expulsion from Czechoslovakia in 1979, you

THIS INTERVIEW *with the distinguished Czech writer* PAVEL KOHOUT *was conducted in Vienna by* DUSAN SIMKO, *who writes regularly for "Die Weltwoche" (Zurich).*

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emphasised that you intended to break through the "isolation" of the tragedy. . . .

KOHOUT: Apart from my writing I have no other function or hope but to maintain contact with my friends and colleagues at home, to be in touch with them, to help defend their interests. For understandable reasons I do not want to say anything about the ways and means of such contacts.

—Not so long ago your friend, the Czech playwright Vaclav Havel, was released from prison after a four-year sentence. . . .

KOHOUT: Havel has proved a number of times that he must be ranked with some of the best playwrights in the world. Now that he has been released we hope for his next new work. As an individual and a citizen he represents one of the great assets of the nation, and in a sense he served in prison "voluntarily." He insisted on his solidarity with his arrested friends, refused to accept the official offer to emigrate, remained to take the consequences, and all in all established new moral standards.

—A hero?

KOHOUT: That's not a word I like. Havel is a writer and has behaved like one. He gave the whole idea of a man-of-letters a dimension of old dignity again, and raised the sense of worth of an intellectual. This must surely be a challenge to writers in the West. They don't have to run out immediately and get themselves arrested, but there are occasions when some courage is called for, when for example "swimming against the current" is called for, not going along with the "in" political trends of the moment.

What I have against some of my colleagues in the West, especially in West Germany, is that they conduct themselves not like writers but like politicians. Instead of exhibiting solidarity with kindred men-of-letters—the writers and intellectuals and academics of silenced, enslaved cultures—and struggling without compromise on their behalf, they hedge

Kafka in Prague & New York

Prague

ONE THINKS OF **Kafka here: he was born a hundred years ago, and he and his work have shaped the spiritual history of the city and of the whole of Bohemia. But the present régime in Czechoslovakia has tried its best to shroud it all in silence. I heard of only one anniversary discussion evening, a modest symposium with a limited audience, at which (according to the official news report from** *Cetka*) **"various viewpoints" were presented. A small book with a few stories has been re-published; otherwise nothing at all.**

How can it be that Franz Kafka appears to the régime to be such a subversive force, full of dangerous notions? He could have been academically ranked as a Classic, and thus easily taken out of all controversial disputation. But that is not the way things happened. With the so-called "rehabilitation" of Kafka in the post-Stalinist years—and here the influence of Professor Edouard Goldstücker was decisive (he had been a victim of Stalin, and today lives in English exile)—began the whole process in the 1960s of the ideological thaw which resulted in the "Prague Spring" of 1968. The régime is nothing if not vindictive: Kafka has to be taboo, if for no other reason than that he happened, quite accidentally, to be loudly talked about fifteen years ago.

THERE ARE FEW MORE REVEALING *indicators of the anxiety and the spiritual neuroses of the present Communist régime in Prague than this. Nothing must be said, done, or thought that has in any way something remotely to do with what took place during the "Prague Spring." This iron principle works in literature and also in economics. The few small attempts to talk of possible reforms, in some circumstances, of certain limited aspects of the ailing Czech economic system has come to a swift end—when the discussion came to be reported in the press and television, Prime Minister Husak personally interfered to stop the rot. This is the way the revisionist reformers of '68 began. He has been there before.*

Victor Meier
FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

New York City

FRANZ KAFKA did us the great service of turning our nightmares into literature. He dignified them, gave them a cringing splendor. He taught us to think of our absurdities as a kind of grace. In his fiction, the incongruous becomes a distinguishing human characteristic. His "Complete Stories" is an encyclopedia of our insecurities and our brave attempts to oppose them.

But not everything is an unqualified success. After 40 years of praising Kafka, we can at last admit some of his faults. If he turned our nightmares into literature, it is also true that he helped to turn our literature into a nightmare. Much of the gloominess, the claustrophobic self-centredness of contemporary fiction might be traced to Kafka.

IN BEING THE FIRST *to use a diffuse anxiety as a plot, Kafka may have been responsible for some of the formlessness and pessimism of our short stories. Certainly when he surrendered himself to a proliferation of antic details, he opened the door to the "absurdity" that became in our literature like a silly refrain that we cannot get out of our head.*

Some of Kafka's stories consist of exhaustive variations on a theme without any sense of forward motion, and this too is a bad habit we may have learned from him. In his less satisfying stories, like "Investigations of a Dog", "Description of a Struggle" and "Josephine the Singer", Kafka seems to believe that if you nag at anything long enough it will yield a metaphor or bleed significance.

His "ironically conservative" style is not always a rich or melodious instrument, and his incessant ironical qualifications occasionally have the effect of talking us not into, but out of the story.

THE REAL TROUBLE **though, is that the world has become "Kafkaesque," as he predicted, and so he surprises us less when we read him today. His truths come so close to us that we wear them now as clichés. Life itself overtakes the prophet and mocks him. From our burrows with six locks on the door and bars on the windows, from our penal colonies of psychoanalysis, we look at Kafka with a jaded sense of** *déjà vu*. **Since the exterminators have killed all the cockroaches in our apartments, we have to find new images of abasement.**

POOR KAFKA! *He is like someone who tells us our uneasy dreams when we are already tired of our dreams, when we are yearning for fresh anxieties, for new forms of disillusionment. We begin to feel toward him and his genius some of the resentment directed against people who are always right, who won't let us forget ourselves.*

Anatole Broyard
INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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and fudge and make the same rotten compromises as the men of politics. How can they meet *tête-à-tête,* in East Berlin or anywhere, the *Kultur*-bosses of the Eastern régimes, who have been the Party-line whips of literary persecution? That is simply intolerable. This kind of behaviour has nothing to do with *détente* or *Entspannung*; nothing at all. It should be put plainly to such people that they will never be *salonfähig,* never be able to mix and mingle as equals, so long as they keep on doing what they are doing. That's the very least that one writer owes to another: a friendly and loyal spirit of solidarity. When they don't, as too many West Germans don't these days, then they are taking a burden of guilt on themselves.

HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY *about those poems which you wrote in the 1950s in honour of Stalin?*

KOHOUT: I loved him, I revered him, and it remains above all his problem that he was not worth it. I hold it to be quite normal and legitimate when a person, a poet, believes in somebody, has faith in him; but it is illegitimate when someone, Stalin for example and his accomplices, exploits unjustly the good faith of their poets. I recognised the situation early enough and learnt lessons enough to last me my whole life. I was, in the year 1948, just 20 years old, and thus did not belong to the generation that was wielding power. I only wrote verses and sang in a youth choir. It was and remains for me an intellectual failure; and I tried to protect myself against the emotional and moral implications. The fate of Hungary and Poland proved, however, that no other development was possible.

—Why do so many of your exiled countrymen see you as an opportunist?

KOHOUT: If I were one I would not today be a banned author but chairman of the Czechoslovakian Writers Union. It is surely enough to look at all my writings taken together. Unlike many of my critics I have since the year 1955—since my play, *September Nights,* in which I first criticised Stalinist practices—been uninterruptedly, as a writer, in the struggle against injustice and the ruling powers-that-be. There were not many who did what I did. Somebody like me who has been so much in the public eye has to expect hostile criticism. It becomes a little ridiculous when my critics are those who took a clear stand against the Prague régime only when they were abroad. I was in the opposition in Prague, and paid a price for it.

—East German Communist writers, in the course of the East-West meetings in West Berlin (for example, Stephan Hermlin) have said that the issues of Peace and of Human Rights are two separate and different questions.

KOHOUT: Hermlin says that because he is a writer who remains loyal to his Communist régime and he cannot put it any other way. He organises and presides over his conferences, and three times he has excluded me: had I been there he knows I would have argued the precise opposite. Still, he can't suppress the truth so easily.

—On 21 August 1968, exactly fifteen years ago, the Red Army marched into Czechoslovakia, and it put an early end to all the Reform efforts. . . .

KOHOUT: Everything I have had to say on that subject I put into my *Diary of a Counter-revolutionary.* I suppose that day was one of the most extraordinary days of my life. I was sitting in a café in Perugia with my wife, drinking wine, when suddenly I heard a newspaper-seller shouting, "*Cecoslovacchia è occupata*!" Not even a playwright could add anything to that.

—How do you feel today about "Charta 77"?

KOHOUT: The movement was and remains an historic event and a turning-point. By that I mean it represented an attempt to build bridges between all the Czechoslovak groups, and above all transcend the prejudices and hostilities that divide them. This is something which in exile abroad does not appear to be possible, since all the groups close themselves in behind the traditional resentments. *Charta 77* was in a way a variation on a motto of Lenin's: "If we ever want to unite, we must first separate. . . . " The message of *Charta 77* was: "If ever we want to separate ourselves in a democratic society, we must all first unite in order to be able to achieve. . . ." That kind of unity was possible on the basis of a Human Rights programme. True, *Charta 77* did not succeed in achieving any concrete political results; but that was hardly to be expected. What is decisive is that even today—despite the persecutions, the isolation, the expulsion of so many of the *Charta* signatories—

Up out of the Orwellian "Memory Hole"

Prague

THE "SOCIALIST ACADEMY" *of Czechoslovakia is an institution here which has been entrusted with the "honourable task" of carrying the "lighted torch" of the teachings of Socialism and Communism into every little village of the land. It has now been getting on with the job by issuing a circular to all its branches calling for the intensification of instruction on the subject of the 1950s.*

Not that this "confidential directive" is suggesting that more attention be paid to the crimes of the Stalin era, with its mass arrests and executions after Moscow-type "Show Trials." On the contrary, the circular emphasises that the current picture of the 1950s has been distorted by "reactionaries", above all during the short-lived crises of the Prague Spring of 1968. At that time only the failures of that period were stressed and many enemies of socialism were actually rehabilitated.

This now has to be finally changed. One must underline the enormous achievements of Socialist Construction, the successes of the agricultural collectivisation (no mention here either of the thousands of farmers expropriated and driven out). In this manner a "politically devastating blow" will be struck against the "traitorous émigrés" who still claim that "the Party committed crimes", even against its own Party members.

Some observers foresee ideological difficulties in the intensified instruction programme, especially if any questions arise as to the role of President Gustav Husak during those troubled days of the 1950s. Who will be able to give the proper Marxist-Leninist answer, since Comrade Husak, as is well known, was unmasked at the time as an "Enemy of the People" and punished with a sentence of life-long imprisonment? It could be, perhaps, that, inspired by Stalin's classic ideal of building socialism in one country, President Husak made his own very loyal contribution to the Party over twelve long years by trying to build socialism in one prison cell.

DIE WELT *(Bonn)*

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the original idea remains alive and intact. This is the proof that it was not all in vain.

There are great peoples who can live from their own strength, and there are those who must try to hold themselves together through a moral imperative. I can hardly believe that there is anybody in Czechoslovakia today who wants to imitate the sacrifices of the Reformer Jan Hus on his way to martyrdom. But the very fact that there was a man named Hus, who said his resounding *No!* at the Council of Constance and preferred to be burned rather than renounce the truths for which he stood, has given hope over some 500 years that our people will be resurrected.

—Is this, then, what Novalis referred to as a special "middle-European consciousness"?

KOHOUT: I feel that the excision of Prague from the European cultural context in the last fifteen years is a great tragedy. There was in the 1960s something of a renaissance of our literature and art, although many in the emigration didn't want to recognise it. And those who remain in Prague, and so bravely try to defend the best European traditions, deserve the respect and help of all Europeans. Nevertheless, our Czechoslovak culture, due to the post-1968 exodus, can now take an important place in the West. A whole host of writers is carrying this so-called "middle-European consciousness" into new circles to an unprecedented extent. The Communist régime predicted that those whom they denounced and expelled and drove into exile would soon be forgotten; and this has simply not happened. I hold this to be a great hope for the future.

—Would you return to your homeland?

KOHOUT: In the event that no conditions are attached, any time. But if this were ever to be possible, then the whole political situation would look completely different.

Asking for Directions

At the burismo turistica I ask
"Do you have a map of this place?"
Map. Map? The word is difficult, maybe
Anglo-Saxon, not Latin? Surely not.

An expert girl is called from next door,
who speaks a little English. Ah, map,
the map you buy two doors away, you will
see English Breakfast, hamburgers.

"Well, the bus times to the capital, you
have the times? Autobus. Brrm Brrm
to the cathedral, big place, shops?"
Ah, shops. Here are some useful cards—

look, the dog's hairdresser, cameras, massage,
very cheap car hire, English Breakfast all day,
exceptional sandals, hair cut while you wait,
plenty bacon y all the eggs, English pub maybe oppen six.

"But the autobus?" Yes, autobus! It go great tour,
all the places. French fries, disco, pirate picnic,
special films, health farm, local fish stew.
If you ask one week, unique hundred year eggs.

"But the autobus? You have times? Timetable?"
Ah yes, timetable. Is in the window of the shoes.
Special shoes from pigs. "And the tickets?"
Tickets, yes, tickets. You buy on the white boat

where the big sign shake in the wind. Look, there.

Alan Harris

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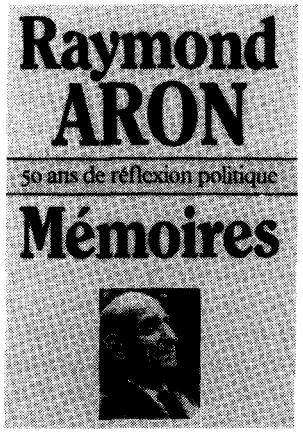
IN THE MARGIN

Death of a Giant

By Melvin J. Lasky



ARON'S *Mémoires* were written during the last years of his life, and published just a few weeks before his fatal stroke in Paris on the steps of the *Palais de Justice*. He must have taken much satisfaction that it immediately went on to the best-seller lists, and that at long last he had moved into the centre of French intellectual recognition and approbation. A cartoonist for a Paris paper sketched an obituary drawing, and the caption remarking on his passing read: "How could he, who was always right, have made such a mistake? . . ."

Once again, as its subtitle ("50 Years of Political Reflection") suggests, we have the spectacle of the man relentlessly devoted to ideas, events, meanings, dangers, hopes and follies. The personal autobiographical pages are few and far between—from his parents, childhood, the death of a young brother, to his 1977 heart attack which at first left him paralysed and speechless. We catch a few glimpses of his wife Suzanne, his daughter Dominique (author of several good books), the tragedies of two other children which almost destroyed him with grief. But for the rest it is a chronicle of France's foremost political intellectual. He was the last of the great generation which included Sartre, Nizan, Mounier, Merleau-Ponty, Camus; but unlike them he was not a literary figure, not an *homme de lettres*. Still, at 78 he had become a cultural "monument", the "great old man" of European public debate. He had been an associate (and a critic) of de Gaulle, an adviser of American Presidents, a powerful voice in German public opinion, a much-respected figure in English academic life. Even hostile critics were moved to honour him, and *Le Monde* praised the new book and later devoted three full pages to an appreciation of his life. Having almost fully recovered from his aphasia, he was invited to talk for hours with television interviewers—and who was there who could ever match the precision, elegance, and wit of his formulations in dialogue? I myself have listened to him on a hundred occasions, and few indeed could cope with his formidable facility at the verbal duel.

Is it regrettable that there is no system of thought that could be called Aronian? He would have expressed impatient pique at the very notion, he who despised and destroyed systems and systematisers. But he did leave a method of analysis, a model of reflectiveness which put information and objectivity at the centre of the critical process of coming to conclusions. Out of his hopes he never fabricated certainties. His own convictions were never defended as if he were protecting a doctrine of salvation against damnable unbelievers. He was a force for classic enlightenment, and every word he wrote was intended to clarify and explain, to expose human error and make plain a few simple (or complex, as the case might be) realities.

THERE WERE TIMES when events proved him dramatically right, but who remembers a book when history itself breaks a big story? Thus, his *Opium of the Intellectuals* had a relatively small influence in the 1950s, and its wisdom and accuracy became quite clear for the addicted ideologues only when the message of Khruschchev's "Secret Speech" thundered through the West. And his general critique of totalitarianism (in the time when Albert Camus was also offering a related analysis) became part of general political culture only when new generations of the so-called "New Philosophers" incorporated it, with youthful enthusiasm and theatrical élan, into their own programme. They never went beyond Aron's framework, and singularly missed his strong scholarly base. Many who finally came around to the recognition of "how right Aron has always been!" lacked even then the master's sense of nuance and his flair for fairness. Still, it is surely rare in intellectual life, and above all in France, that classic chamber of Left-Right divisions, to witness so much self-critical movement and re-orientation. François Bondy calls my attention to this passage quoted in both the Catholic *Esprit* and the Left's *Nouvel Observateur*:

> "For 30 years now Aron has not tired of being right. With the years he has succeeded in penetrating the thought-systems of his opponents, exposing them from within, and forcing them to a reckoning with their own inconsistencies. Aron raised the debate to a higher level. When will the Left deign to meet him on that higher level? . . ."

There was, then, a bitter truth to the funereal joke: the most serious mistake Aron ever made was to die when he did, just when all were beginning to see how right he'd always been. . . .

Perhaps he did take a few wrong turnings in his life and career. In the early post-War period, after serving on de Gaulle's staff in London, he joined the General's *Rassemblement*. Was it a slip (he left the Gaullists shortly thereafter)? Could it again—as in the case of his special deference to Sartre—be attributed to his weakness for "genius" (and here André Malraux's influence also played a seductive role)? Subsequently he was faced with a choice of *Le Figaro* or *Le Monde* as his journalistic platform. Should he have gone "left" rather than "right" (as he did), and would he then have had more influence, even if as many difficulties with narrow ideological guide-lines, had he made the choice which *Le Monde*'s famed editor Hubert Beuve-Méry always pressed him to make? And what of the emotional turbulence he went through in the crisis of '68 when the students of the Sorbonne,

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the best and the worst, shouted obscenities at him and boycotted his lectures and seminars? Could the classic man of reason have found a reasonable path? Hardly likely; but what an irony for the most powerful public voice in the academy on behalf of "reforming the ancient structures of the university" to be vilified by so-called militants for modern change. He held fast; for there are times when compromise is both unreasonable and dishonourable. What were called *les événements* disappeared into albums of faded clippings and photos, and nothing remained (as Aron put it soberly in his *Révolution introuvable*) of the rhetoric and the theatricality which both Tocqueville and Flaubert had exposed as French ideological vices a hundred years before.

RAYMOND ARON is gone. He was heir, for all his scepticism, to the best traditions of European Judaism and the French Enlightenment. A committed democrat in the spirit of John Stuart Mill and Tocqueville, and a political scientist and sociologist with the sharpness of a Marx and a Max Weber, he was also a cosmopolitan publicist, with a familiar by-line in the world press, and at home in three or four languages and political cultures. He was a liberal who had only one single libertarian standard when it came to issues of censorship, dogmatism, labour camps, and any other form of tyrannical or totalitarian excess. A man of ringing eloquence who kept his speech and his style free from rhetoric and the cant of conventional sloganeering, he remained an inspiring teacher who offered no intellectual tricks, no utopian optimism, no impassioned panaceas, only a modest and earnest concern with the human condition, the spiritual need to understand it and the ethical devotion to save it from needless troubles and tragedies. . . .When will Europe produce his like again?

Grenada Jewels

THE OPINIONS of our commentator, Edward Pearce, as well as the debating points of "the Noble Lords" in Parliament (both in last month's ENCOUNTER) are all very much to the topical point; but in this instance of the incredible Grenada story it is surely the hard unadorned facts which are more pertinent and truly illuminating. I think the historian Hugh Thomas (Lord Thomas of Swynnerton, in our *Hansard* account) touched upon the dramatic newness of the post-invasion Caribbean situation when he remarked that this was surely the first time that a Marxist-Leninist state, tiny though it was, had fallen apart, or (if you will) had been disintegrated or destabilised; and now we could see it all from the inside.

Some bits and pieces of totalitarian reality did emerge fleetingly in 1953 in Eastern Germany when for a day (16–17 June) the workers' uprising there "liberated" a few prison archives. These were only a few pages, and they matched what we already knew from the available Soviet documents (first captured by the German Army, then liberated by the US Army) known as "the Smolensk archive." More emerged in both the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968. The usual Communist controls of secrecy and censorship were, alas, soon restored—at the point of Soviet Army bayonets—but we had for a time a good if horrific look at how the cruel and barbarous régimes which led to such popular mass disaffection had been operating. The Czech documentation of the "show trials" and the other judicial proceedings, which unjustly condemned so many hundreds of thousands, was certainly unprecedented. But we must also remember that the Party and the Secret Police remained intact, and preserved their "Bolshevik integrity." Few top secret files leaked. One official Polish censor fled from Warsaw to Stockholm, and *Solidarity* felt free enough to publish the details of the entire apparatus of censorship and mind-control.

For many liberal-left theoreticians these days, the very concept of totalitarianism is non-existent, but for the curious historian who is still interested in "how a Totalitarian System works", the case of Grenada has been a field-day and a free-for-all. The snippets which have come through the world press in all-too-brief dispatches need to be pondered (a new and even more sensational story is always breaking elsewhere!). One can only hope that the US State Department, or perhaps the Caribbean Organisation, will see to it that a complete Red Book is published, giving us all the documents captured on the island after the Marines landed and the Jamaica-Barbados officers had looked around and satisfied themselves that their fears had been justified.[1]

The details of both the armaments caches and the secret diplomatic treaties with the Soviet bloc were dismaying enough. But the whole spirit of a dictatorship which cultivated what they called "Bolshevik staunchness" is at once depressing and fascinating. In only four short years Messrs Bishop, Coard, and Austin—despite murderous arguments among themselves (faction-fighters will always be with us, comrades)—were able to set up a little Caribbean sand-box operation of Marxist-Leninist principles which can almost function as an "ideal model" for political scientists.

Alas, so much of our Western press is politically more concerned—as was the "Noble Lord" Lord Kennet (Wayland

[1] A first selection of documents has now been published (16 December) by the US Dept. of State and Dept. of Defense. The delay was inexcusable. It was said by one hesitant official that the archives could be considered as "stolen" and should perhaps be returned intact to the Grenada government; another dilatory diplomat explained, quite unpersuasively, that world opinion might take them to be "Yankee forgeries."

No one seemed to be aware, in the historical amnesia of our times, that the great drama of liberation—as in the French Revolution, exposing the Royal records, as in the Russian Revolution, revealing the Czarist archives—is always associated with the climax of truth-telling. To hesitate is to lose.

Still, one document—belated though it is—is having international repercussions. It discloses a "Secret Regional Caucus" to coordinate efforts to influence the Socialist International (which was to meet in Grenada, although the organisation is not yet on the record with condolences for the murder of their S.I. host).

The revelation of a "secret caucus" has scandalised many Socialist parties around the world—especially in view of the fact that the representatives of the Cuban Communist Party were present to assist in the plans for manipulating them. A first report which alarmed the Italian Socialists appeared in *Il Giornale* (dispatch by Gino Bianco, 12 December 1983).

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Young)—to measure the length of the air strip (8000 feet? 9? 10?) in order to determine whether it *really* was intended for Cuban-Soviet military operations or merely for tourists coming to a paradise island which was eager to cash in on its "island-in-the-sun" operation. The political focus is chronically one-eyed: What misdemeanours *are* the Americans up to now? The documents, even in excerpts, at least restore attention to where it belongs—what was high Soviet strategy, operating directly from Moscow and sometimes from Castro's Havana centre for "expeditionary revolutionary forces" (now as "health workers" in Angola, as Ambassador Andy Young once explained; now as "construction workers" in Grenada)—what was the Kremlin really up to?

I was struck by the elementary obviousness of the blunt reply given by the Soviet Army's chief-of-staff. The captured document revealed details of a meeting in Moscow, on 10 March 1983, between Mr Bernard Bourne (Minister-Counsellor of the Grenadian Embassy) and Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. There were the usual commitments to increasing arms supplies, but there was also this little bit of political ideology from the top manager of the Soviet military-industrial complex:

> ". . . The Marshal said that over two decades ago, there was only Cuba in Latin America. Today there are Nicaragua, Grenada, and a serious battle is going on in El Salvador.
>
> The Marshal of the Soviet Union then stressed that US imperialism would try to prevent progress but that there were no prospects for imperialism to turn back history. . . .
>
> Moreover, Marshal Ogarkov emphasised that in an aggressive climate the military people have tasks to do. He explained that since Grenada was located close to US imperialism and was not developed militarily, the Grenada revolution would have to be specifically vigilant at all times. . . . Further still, the Marshal of the Soviet Union reminded Major Louison [Major Einstein Louison, Grenadian chief-of-staff, then "studying" in Moscow] that the Soviet Union would contribute to raising the combat readiness and preparedness of the armed forces of Grenada. . . . Additionally, referring to the question of deputation of Soviet specialists to Grenada to conduct studies related to the construction of military projects, the Marshal informed the Grenadian side that the team of specialists would be sent in one month's time. . . .
>
> The entire meeting was conducted in an atmosphere of warmth, friendliness, simplicity and unpretentiousness. The meeting ended with warm embraces."

This is clear enough (although there will always be those who imagine the struggle to be simply one of agrarian reformers against poverty). And surely this much could be easily comprehended by the Grenadian revolutionaries trying hard to master "ML", the fragments of Marxism-Leninism they picked up from Left Club circles in the London School of Economics. For the rest it would seem to be a kind of pidgin-Marxism. They try hard to follow the music, but the tune always comes out as the refrain of a calypso ballad—as when, in the purge of the unfortunate Maurice Bishop, the Prime Minister who was incapable of taking a staunch Bolshevik line, he was condemned as being "*counter against the revo.*" One can almost sing that last phrase. Easily chantable also was the Grenada Airport's slogan: "REVOLUTION's the SOLUTION!" Indeed some coinages are indisputably original, even in the long history of Party rhetoric, as in the vivid description by the unhappy comrades (blaming it all, of course, on Bishop, the hapless heretic) of the troubled revolution, with a demoralised army and a sinking economy, as being "*in a state of rut.*"

IN THIS mini-Marxist régime the theory may have been thin and the practice primitive, but there is always a certain native shrewdness which accompanies the wily demands of holding personal power. The unpopular "New Jewel" movement may have come to be called the "New Jungle" movement, but the poor chaps did make a serious attempt to better themselves. In the first place they made the island larger by exaggerating the population statistics. Evidently there was no basis for the official figure of 110,000—but it served to make its expanding military force seem slightly less disproportionate; and, far more important, it reduced the official per capita figure (i.e., for purposes of getting a 14.1 million dollar loan) from $166 to $128. Bishop's attempt at a census came up, originally, with 85,000. On this basis the Grenadian Revolution's appeal for international aid and foreign loans seemed unappealing.

As one document reveals (the protocol of the meeting of the Political-Economic Bureau on 3 August, led by Bishop and his subsequent assassin, General Hudson Austin), a way had to be found to make the statistics look more attractive for Western bankers and Aid officials. After all, Brazil was asking for "only" $50 per head in order to get its near-bankrupt finances in order. Maurice Bishop suggested taking a lesson from the clever comrades in Cuba and Surinam on how to do the national book-keeping in such a way as to have "loan-appeal."

> "Comrades again highlighted the urgent importance of training Comrades to adjust the banking figures. Someone should be sent to Cuba or the Soviet Union. . . . The Comrades from Nicaragua and Cuba must visit Grenada to train Comrades in the re-adjustment of the books."

And it was Maurice Bishop who (according to the protocol) proposed that they learn from their neighbours' accountancy experiences and "introduce for these purposes two different sets of book-keeping procedures."

It is not yet a matter of record whether there was time enough for that. At any rate, between the high hopes of summer and the last October days when US Marines arrived to "*counter the revo*" at least one good loan from the International Monetary Fund was approved for Grenada. The lesson for other revolutionary régimes is clear: Accountants of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but the raw deficits in your uncooked books. . . .

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LETTERS

Reply to Herman Kahn

ENCOUNTER's respect for American opinions is gratifying; and what better source of them than *The New York Times*? Still, it is rather surprising, not to say disturbing, that of all the pieces from all the angles which that formidable daily has devoted in recent months to nuclear weapons, you should have chosen to publish Herman Kahn's (ENCOUNTER, March). Not that Mr Kahn hasn't studied the field (though his doctrine of nuclear deterrence hasn't worn well beside, say, Bernard Brodie's); but like the physicist Edward Teller he puts his knowledge to intellectually questionable uses.

We are told, for example, that American leaders of the Roman Catholic Church are at fault for offering little or no "evidence" for their view that a nuclear war would not stay within bounds. How, it may be asked, is one to arrive *safely* at evidence that a nuclear war would not, or for that matter would, stay limited? There is at least doubt among many political and military analysts whether the search for evidence is worth the risk; and General Bernard Rogers, commander-in-chief of NATO forces in Europe, was quoted by *The New York Times* (no less) on 19 September 1982 as being of the opinion that any exchange of tactical nuclear weapons would "escalate very rapidly" into strategic nuclear war.

Again, Mr Kahn asks for "evidence" that a nuclear exchange would (quoting the bishops) "threaten the created order." He tells us, too, that certain studies show that "civil defence measures would save tens of millions of lives." What he does not tell us is how many more millions even the best defence measures probably would not save. What kind of evidence of that would satisfy this strategic tank-thinker?

Finally, Mr Kahn manages to suggest that his views, rather than the Church's, have the support of "most scientists, military analysts, physicists, and other informed and concerned citizens." He, and perhaps your readers too, may be interested to learn that on 15 March 1983 an "Open Letter" was presented to both chambers of the United States Congress endorsing a bilateral, verifiable, nuclear weapons freeze and calling on the legislature to withhold funds for nuclear weapons pending its negotiation. The Letter was signed by over 3000 members (faculty, staff, and students) of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, including most of its senior academic and administrative officers; three former MIT Presidents (two of them former science advisers to Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson); four Nobel prize-winners; forty-nine holders of distinguished or endowed chairs; and most significantly perhaps, by *all eleven* scientists and engineers known to have helped develop the first atomic bombs at Los Alamos forty years ago who are still associated with MIT.

Almost any of these notables could provide commentary for your magazine as expert as Herman Kahn's; not to mention numerous articles in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* or *Scientific American* that are designed for the intelligent general reader. As for other informed and responsible opinions, there is always Herbert Scoville, former Deputy Director of the CIA; Paul Warnke, United States SALT negotiator and former Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; Robert McNamara, former US Secretary of Defense; James Fallows, author of *National Defense*; or such doughty retired American admirals as Hyman Rickover, Noel Gayler, Gene La Rocque, and Eugene Carroll. None of these could quite be described by Mr Kahn as "victims of passing fashions—and leftist or liberal fashions at that." Nor are they likely to be misled by the Star of Bethlehem. And most, if not all of them, have published their views in *The New York Times*.

ALSO IN THE MARCH ENCOUNTER, Mr Philip Towle appears to believe that only the Soviets have seriously contemplated the possibility of waging and winning a nuclear war. I wonder what he has been reading since May 1982, when Richard Halloran unveiled the Pentagon's new five-year Defense Guidance Plan and its call for the United States to be prepared to fight a nuclear war which should not end except "on terms favourable to the United States." Is that anything but a euphemism for winning? (The Republican Party had of course campaigned in 1980 on the promise of achieving American "military superiority"; not just maintaining parity, mind you.) Given the recent public statements of the Reagan Administration, and especially of Defense Secretary Weinberger, it is hard to share Mr Towle's conclusion that "the combination of Soviet political weakness and military strength, rather than the arms race, is the greatest threat to world peace." At least an equal threat is posed, at present, by the nuclear belligerence and folly of Reagan's government, and acknowledging that does not at all entail approving the Soviets' own expansionism, whether political or military.

MURRAY BIGGS
MIT Disarmament Study Group
Cambridge, Mass.

I SHALL NOT burden ENCOUNTER's readers with a report on my reading since May 1982 to see whether it comes up to the exacting standards demanded by MIT.

Mr Biggs says that I believe that only the Soviets have seriously contemplated the possibility of waging and winning a nuclear war. As the Americans fought and won a war with nuclear weapons in 1945 and relied upon such weapons subsequently to balance what they took to be the superiority of Soviet conventional forces, it would be surprising if I did believe this. What I actually wrote in ENCOUNTER was that "Western strategists . . . have tended to emphasise deterrence and only rarely tried to see what would happen if deterrence failed." I then went on to say that this had changed recently, and I explained the change as a result of the growing accuracy of nuclear weapons and the incredibility of threatening Soviet cities when the US population would also be destroyed. I might have added a feeling that, if the Soviets had examined what would happen during a nuclear war, they would be more likely to be deterred if the Americans had also done so. How Mr Biggs could misconstrue what I wrote I fail to see.

Mr Biggs attacks the "nuclear belligerence and folly of Reagan's government." I would not defend many of the Administration's comments which, I think, have had a divisive effect on the Western alliance. But, however emotionally unsatisfying this may be to Mr Biggs and his study group, by and large states avoid trouble when they are less tough than they appear to be. Conversely they court disaster when they are tougher than they appear. We had a nice reminder of this in April 1982 when a little table-banging by the British Foreign Office before the Falkland war began might have saved Argentina from humiliation and both countries from the loss of many lives. The Kremlin is likely to behave with more circumspection towards Mr Reagan than it did towards Mr Carter.

PHILIP TOWLE
Queens' College
Cambridge

Koestler

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND why Leo Rosten (Letters, December 1983) is making such a to-do about my assertion that Arthur Koestler looked Jewish. I suspect that the real difference between Rosten and myself is that he thinks it is an insult to say that someone "looks Jewish" while I regard it as a compliment.

HYAM MACCOBY
Leo Baeck College
London

THE ENVY and jealousy of academics is pursuing Arthur Koestler to the grave. Academics are people who think they know a lot about one limited subject; they are perplexed and angered about the last Renaissance man who tried to know a little (or quite a bit) about many subjects and endeavoured to see connections *they* failed to, indeed, could not possibly see.

M. Hammerton says (ENCOUNTER, December) that Koestler was ignorant about evolutionary biology; that he lacked even *elementary* ideas about probability. I doubt all this but I am not qualified to argue even with a lecturer of an obscure provincial university. However, to dismiss that exciting and thought-provoking book, *The Art of Creation*, as a collection of "high-sounding and prolix nothings" shows that M. Hammerton lacks even elementary knowledge about writing, humanity, and creativity (to keep the list of his ignorance as short as possible).

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Life & Letters Today

New York City

PLAYFUL: **Arthur Kopit was commissioned to write a play about the great debate on nuclear politics. That was two years ago. His exhaustive research took him to the Pentagon, to high-level people in the Reagan Administration and, finally, to writer's block. Now Mr Kopit has written a play about a playwright who can't write a play about the great debate on nuclear politics. Called** *End of the World with Symposium to Follow,* **it will open in Washington in the spring, if there is one.**

DAILY MAIL

Peking

CONFUCIUS DE-FOGGED: *Confucius has finally been "rehabilitated" by China's Communist party. The famous philosopher was vilified in the mid-1970s as an "old charlatan" but yesterday the official "Giangming Daily" published a major article summing up Confucius's contributions to Chinese history since his birth more than 2,000 years ago.*

The newspaper concluded: "Confucius was a great thinker, teacher and politician who deserves to be calmly studied in a scientific manner so that the fog of mystery can be swept away and his historical role accurately established."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

CLEAN-UP: *Roget's Thesaurus, the reference book that has "improved, elevated, refined and purified" the work of writers for the past 130 years, has undergone a feminist facelift. In a new edition published this week, phrases such as* **"mankind, countryman, rich man"** *have been replaced by* **"human kind, country dweller,** *and* **rich person."**

The editor responsible for this massive overhaul—more than 20,000 words have been added or reclassified—is Ms Susan Lloyd, 41, who spent three-and-a-half years updating the Thesaurus and cleansing it of any male chauvinist tendencies **[write Simon Freeman** *(sic)* **and Joan Smith].**

She struck a blow for women's lib supporters by eliminating all words that are

"biased, warped, twisted, swayed, jaundiced, embittered, prejudiced, closed, clannish and cliquish."

She has also put in "the huge number of new expressions" generated by the changes of the past 20 years:

Eurocrat, ombudsman, troubleshooter, psephologist, anchorman, DJ, punks, skinheads, groupies, playgroup, bulk-buy, credit cards, tower blocks, listed building, solar panel, caftan, bodystocking, home-knits, boutique, ring road, minicab, juggernaut, jumbo jet, jet set, jet lag, multinationals, positive discrimination, genetic engineering, test-tube baby. . . ."

TIMES/OBSERVER

London

INNUENDO: *Kenny Everett, the disc jockey, was admonished by the BBC yesterday for a remark about the Prime Minister on his Saturday morning show on Radio 2. He said:*

"When Britain was an Empire, we were ruled by an Emperor. When we became a Kingdom, we were ruled by a King. Now we're a country we're ruled by Margaret Thatcher."

Everett, who in June said at a Young Tory rally "Let's bomb Russia or let's kick Michael Foot's stick away", was warned of the need for "constant vigilance." Mr Bryant Marriott, Controller of Radio 2, said later: "A few listeners appear to have detected an innuendo—this is one of the hazards of unscripted live broadcasting."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Williamsburg, Virginia

WRONG NOTE: *The main attraction outside the former governor's mansion in colonial Williamsburg was provided by a Redcoat drum-and-fife band which paraded in front of the welcoming dais playing a medley of old-American tunes.*

Tactfully, the band dropped "Yankee Doodle" when Mrs Thatcher arrived in case the song's revolutionary connotations might offend her, and played "The British Grenadier" instead.

Sadly, a similar attempt to be tactful backfired with two of the other leaders. Mr Pierre Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, was greeted with a rendering of "The Maple Leaf Forever", which stirs unhappy memories of defeat among French Canadians. Mr Yasuhiro Nakasone, the Japanese Prime Minister, was serenaded with a song that was used to raise the morale of Japanese Navy crews before going into battle during the Second World War and symbolized the rise of Japanese militarism.

THE TIMES

London

HORRIBILE DICTU: **The trial at the Old Bailey of David Martin was halted when the jury asked for a recess to discuss "a question of evidence." It followed separate descriptions given by two police officers of what actually happened at the scene of the shooting.**

During the lunch adjournment Mr Justice Kilner-Brown received a note from the seven men and five women on the jury. It requested a recess to discuss a question of evidence.

The Judge said: "I have never come across this before. It is very unusual."

He added: "You have asked for a recess, using that horrible American word. We prefer adjournment."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

ANGELIC: **In Neil Kinnock's interview with Brian Widlake this week, the new Labour Party Leader referred to "theologists arguing how many saints could stand on the eye of a pin." The test of a great politician, of course, is the ability to give a new twist to an old argument.**

THE TIMES

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All this however would not matter very much. But to dismiss a great man who has just died in tragic circumstances and is being mourned by his friends and admirers in a commemorative issue of ENCOUNTER with a great deal of warmth, sense of loss and love as "a gullible and arrogant ass" seems to me the reaction of—well, not a gullible, but an insensitive and arrogant ass.

GEORGE MIKES

London

Is Freedom a "Fraud"?

GEORGE URBAN'S INTERVIEW with Jeane Kirkpatrick [ENCOUNTER, November 1983] brings to mind a point which may answer some of his questions which touch on whether the West can afford freedom in the face of the imminent danger the Soviet Union poses. I am thinking of how Urban and Kirkpatrick so comfortably assume that the West is an arena of "free societies, free peoples, and freely chosen governments."

If current world politics had developed into the present situation between East and West in the face of the existence of such a free world as both Urban and Kirkpatrick so readily assume does exist, Urban's questions would point up the practical indefensibility of the "free world." The plain fact is that the West is far from a realm of freedom.

A telling confrontation between the Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union and a free world would, I am certain, lead to the downfall of the former without even a hot war. But the problem we face is not only that the Soviets threaten the West. It is that even individuals like Urban and Kirkpatrick seem to believe—and speak in a way that indicates they do believe—that what they say about the West, concerning its being a free world, is in fact so. Yet they are wrong. In the effectively distinctive sense in which the Soviets want to abolish the West, namely, as an arena of genuine individual liberty, free minds and free markets, and all the other free institutions which would characterise an actual free society, the West is not free and has never been. (Even for Marxists this causes some faltering of conviction, since by Marx's account such a genuinely free, capitalist, society is an indispensable prerequisite for socialist development. In the *Grundrisse* he makes plain that capitalism must develop fully before it can be superseded.)

It is sad that instead of settling for a distorted picture, the acceptance of which as that representing the free society can, of course, call into question the prudence of freedom (with "freedom" really meaning the mush of the welfare state, a largely socialised economy, a foreign policy which is anything but geared toward the defence of free institutions but rather toward the protection of vital interests, etc.), astute minds such as Urban and Kirkpatrick do not engage in the necessary reformation of what are quasi-free societies into bona fide free societies. I am confident that success in that endeavour would render the problem of having to face the Soviet danger less complicated. As for now, the strongest weapon against the West is that its self-proclaimed libertarianism is a fraud. And the Soviets make ample use of this, as do all their fellow-travellers in the West.

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Cultural Contradiction

ON page 30 of your November 1983 issue, Mrs Jeane Kirkpatrick is quoted as saying that the US is a multicultural society.

Q. *What is a society?*

A. A group of entities defined by some factor common to all of them.

Q. *Then entities not possessing this factor do not form part of the society defined by it?*

A. Evidently not.

Q. *In the case of human societies, what is the name of such a factor?*

A. It is called a culture.

Q. *Then the phrase "multicultural society" is a contradiction in terms?*

A. It would appear so.

Newton Abbot GEOFFREY ROBINSON
Devon

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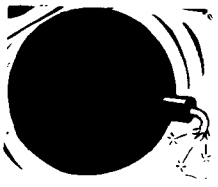
From Azeff to Agca



THE *tenebrous world of Dostoevsky's* **"The Devils"** *and Conrad's* **"Under Western Eyes"** *has never been particularly well understood in the West, even though glimpses of it have been imaginatively absorbed by some Western readers.*

The world of **"provokatsiya"** *was typified by the Okhrana* **agent provocateur** *Azeff who infiltrated the ranks of the Social Revolutionaries and organized a number of terrorist acts in Russia. Other* **agents provocateurs** *in the Okhrana had more limited aims: for instance, they infiltrated the milieux of Polish exiles abroad. They often produced writings and pamphlets which served the same purpose as disinformation does more generally today, thus providing the early prototypes for this technique. But the focus of Western interest was always the internal significance and general ethical implications of the revolutionaries' struggles with their alter egos in the Tsarist security police, the Okhrana. Historical continuity between the Okhrana and the KGB has also always been perceived in terms of internal repression. However, such continuity is relevant not only to internal developments in the Soviet Union, but also to the murky activities of the Soviet secret police abroad. Neither a knowledge of these, nor an understanding of their origins is very widespread. Moreover, it is not simply a question of continuity—the KGB is not only bigger and more efficient than the Okhrana—it is a problem of the new scope of its activities as a result of the change in the nature of the Russian state; it is a problem of the international implications of its transformation into a totalitarian Soviet state.*

THERE IS A **general reluctance in the West to face these implications, as exemplified in the attempt on the Pope's life, particularly in respect of the general background to the historical record of terrorist acts abroad and the attempts to cover them up by disinformation techniques. The matter is now in the hands of an Italian magistrate. But it is not always recognized that legal decisions require standards of proof that are different from those necessary for holding reasonable beliefs about historical crimes (organized with the full support of the machinery of state). After all, even today we have no legal proof of who organized the murder of Trotsky, but although the murderer, Ramon Mercader, unlike Ali Agca, never indicated who stood behind him, there is very little doubt about the identity of the instigator.**

In the 1930s, many people were ready to believe Bukharin's confession about crimes he had not committed. Today there are many who are inclined to disbelieve the confession of Ali Agca about a crime they know that he has committed.

Leopold Labedz
in SURVEY (*London*)

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